VOL. CCXLVII, No. 3205a

THE SPHERE, 1961
With which are incorporated "BLACK & WHITE" and "GRAPHIC"

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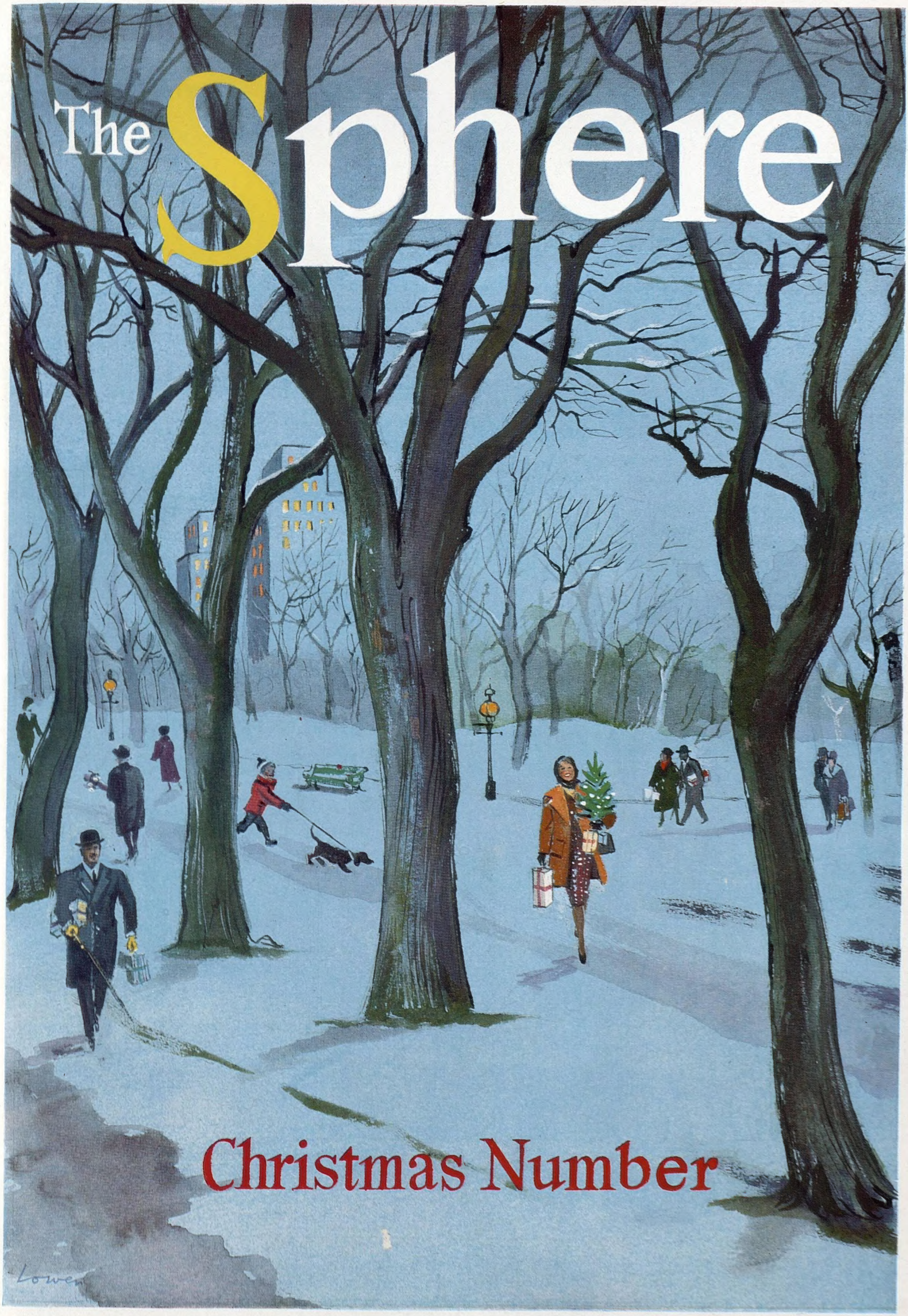

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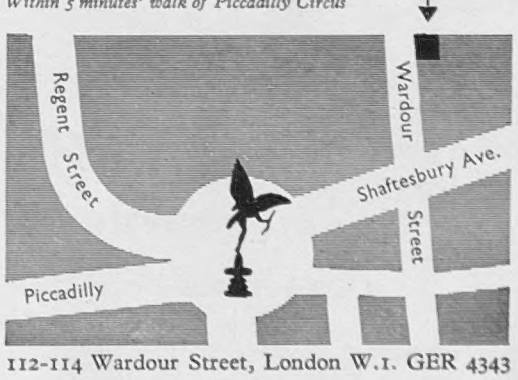

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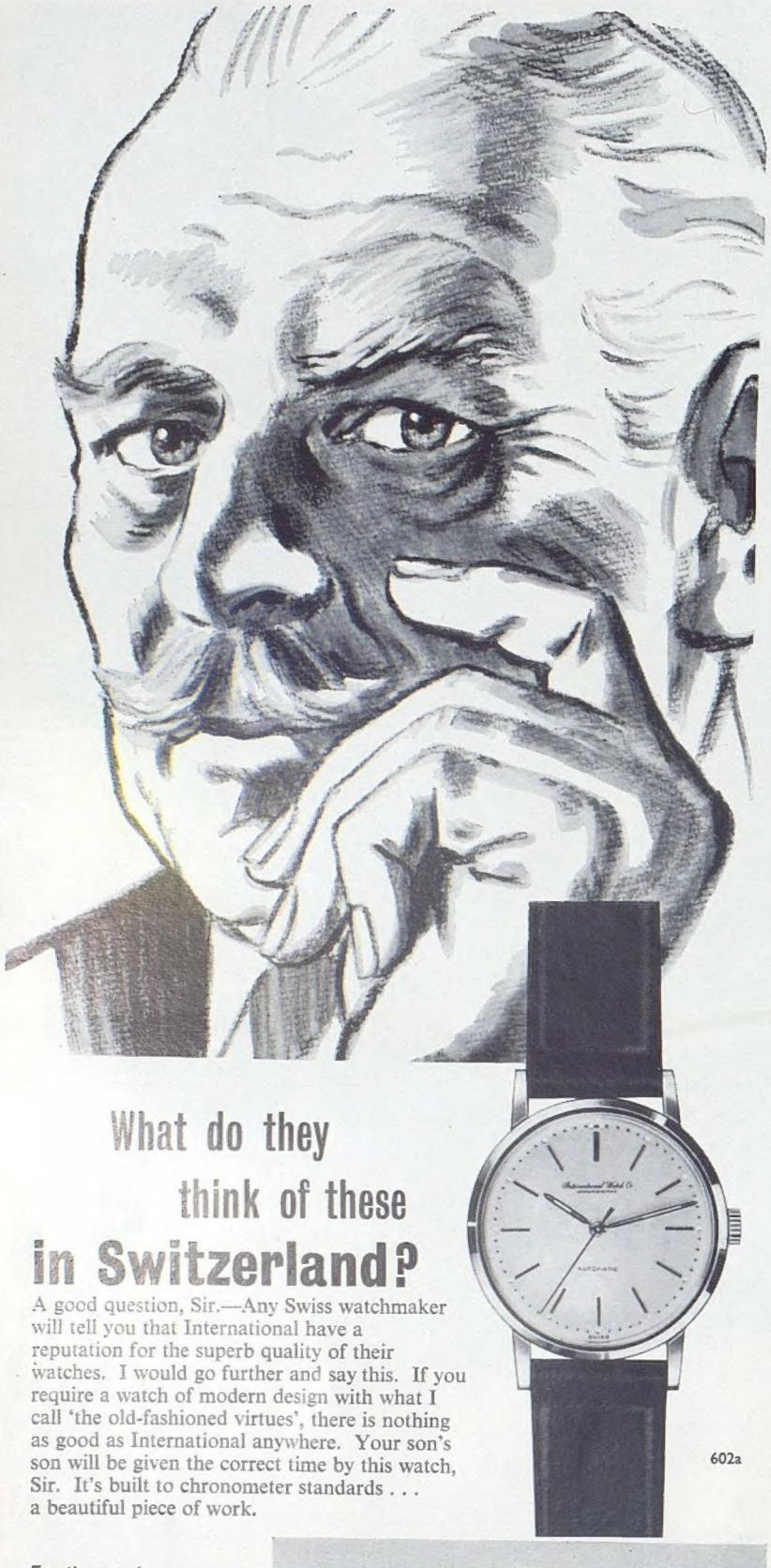

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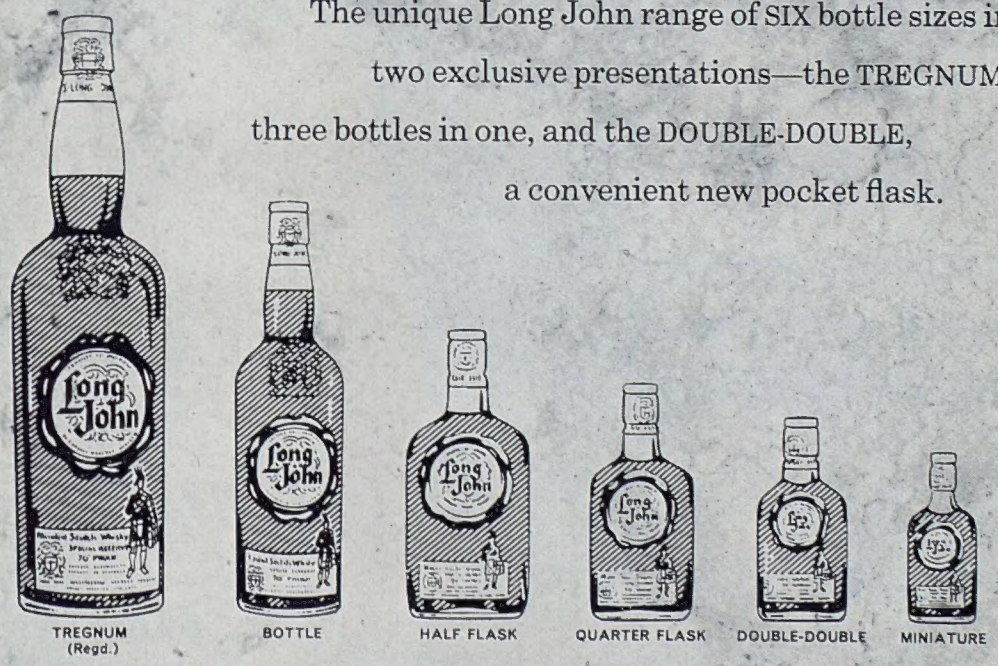

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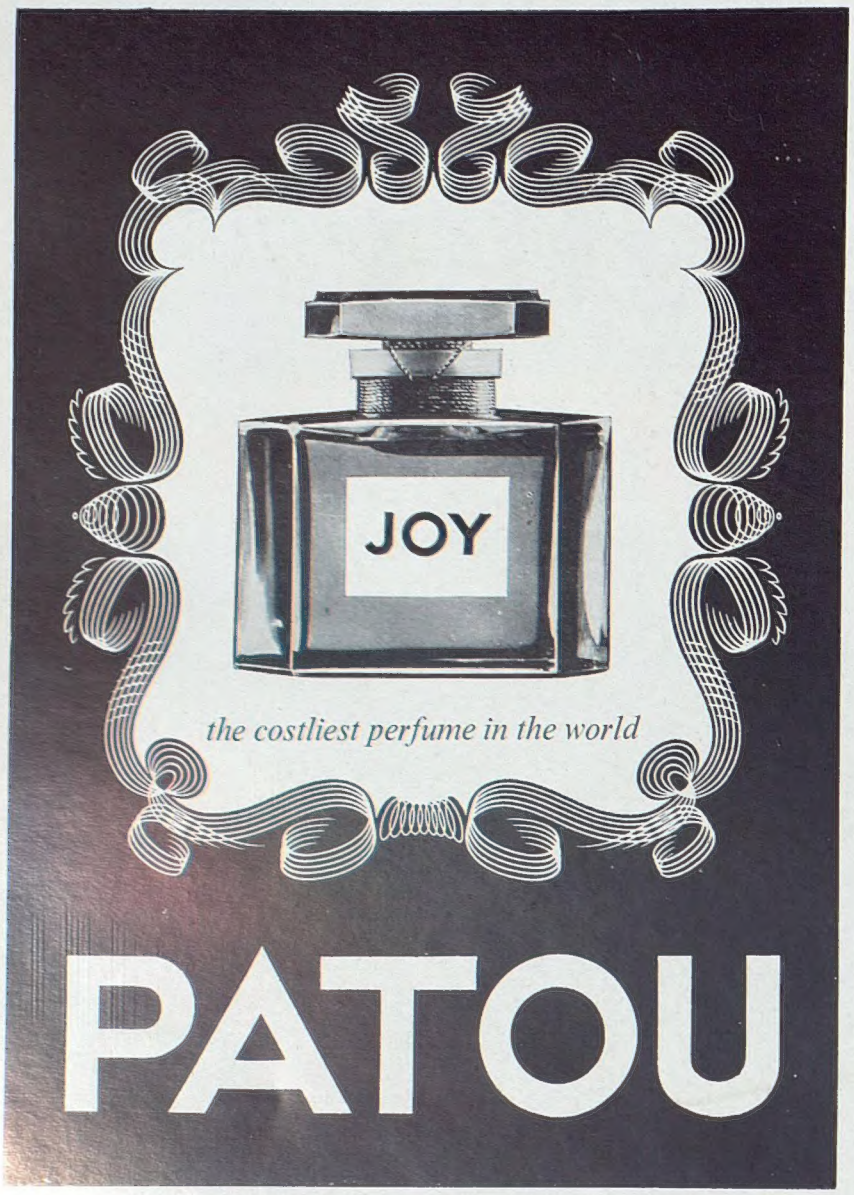

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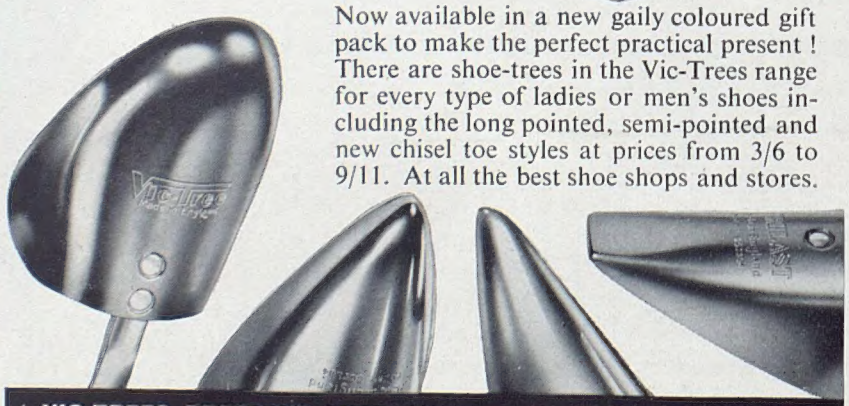

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There can be no mistake about the date of this scene. The boy in his Eton collar and knickerbocker suit completing the snowman with the pipe; the tam-o'-shanters, sailor suits, black stockings and button boots; the doll's pram and, in the background, well-protected against the cold, the parents returning from a Christmas shopping expedition in their Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost. It is a year or two before the outbreak of the First World War. A well-to-do family is preparing for Christmas in their comfortable home standing in extensive grounds in Surrey. The father drives daily to the station to travel to his business in London. He and his wife may have been discussing the political situation or the new craze for ragtime music. But the children's thoughts are centred entirely on the coming festivities.

THE FINISHING TOUCHES

Painted by Geoffrey S. Fletcher

THE YEAR OF RAGTIME

Nash's original Regent Street is little altered in 1912. The sandwich man, near the entrance to the Café Royal, is advertising Nurse Dora's massage and baths. The year 1912 saw the introduction of ragtime into London and the fashion for this music soon spread throughout the country, such songs as "Alexander's Ragtime Band" or "Everybody's Doing It," being on everyone's lips. At the Bioscope Cinema in Vauxhall Bridge Road, London, the pianist played ragtime when it suited tear-jerkers, Western adventures or custard pie comedy films. The cinema still exists today, under the name of the Biograph. Churned out by roundabouts and other attractions the music enlivened the scene on Fair days on Hampstead Heath. At the Derby no doubt some of those who had backed the winner, whistled or hummed "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee," or another ragtime tune as they collected their winnings. Geoffrey Fletcher's picture shows the crowd opposite the old stands, demolished and replaced after World War II. The scene on the Thames at Pangbourne, Berkshire, is a reminder that the gramophone was being used in 1912 to provide background music.

The Bioscope, the first cinema to be built as such in England

The August Bank Holiday Fair on Hampstead Heath. Behind the Pearly with his Donahs are the yachts, or swingboats, worked by steam, and a roundabout

At the Derby of 1912, a lady in cartwheel hat and "classic line" dress is on the right

Water Colours by
Geoffrey S. Fletcher

A pleasure steamer from London passes along the river at Pangbourne. The gramophone on the deck is probably an early H.M.V. or Marconiphone

HOW TO AVOID BEING POOPED

From the oil painting by Montague Dawson

Reproduced by permission of Messrs. Frost & Reed Ltd.

One of the hazards experienced by sailing vessels, running before heavy seas in bad weather, was that of being pooped—an extra large wave breaking over the stern of the vessel and causing severe damage as the water raced forward along the decks. A device used by sailing captains to avoid this hazard was as follows: a stout manila cable was paid out from one quarter and taken in at the other. The bight of the cable was thus dragged aft of the ship beneath the surface of the sea. Its depth could be easily regulated by the amount of rope paid out in relation to the speed of the vessel, but a depth of about 6 ft. below the surface was generally considered to be the most satisfactory. The following seas, when they reached the submerged cable, were broken up and, toppling over, ran in a mass of foam round the vessel. It was reckoned that this device was generally successful, although it reduced a ship's speed. At the same time it gave the helmsman some measure of confidence, for it was a nerve-racking ordeal to struggle with the wheel of a heavy vessel in high seas, when there was danger of an especially large wave crashing over the stern with a force sufficient to break the wheel, kill the helmsman and cause the ship to broach to disastrously.

AUTUMN

Painted by Pauline Baynes

The period is the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The boy and the girl are blackberrying, watched by their dog. In the background horsemen are hunting a stag. Round the border of the painting are various seasonal fruits, berries, plants and leaves which, no doubt, the children will also be seeking. At the bottom are some contemporary toys—a knight armoured and mounted for the joust, a doll and its cupboard bed, a miniature replica of the type in which the youngsters themselves sleep. It will be noticed that there are no specific children's fashions, their clothes are counterparts of those worn by adults. The boy and girl may soon start singing nursery rhymes such as "Broken Bridges"; or

"Jacke boy, ho! boy, newes!
The cat is in the well
Let us ring for her knell,
Ding, dong, ding, dong bell." or
"I had a little bonny nag,
His name was Dapple Grey,
And he would bring me to an alehouse,
A mile out of my way."

The boy and girl are skating in the Victorian era. Their terrier has plainly evolved from his Elizabethan ancestor but the children's clothes are now in a style different from adult dress. In the background is a fine slope for sledging and the dog cart, a popular form of conveyance, draws a girl past a woman pulling faggots. The border of the painting shows winter plants, and branches and twigs devoid of their foliage. The contemporary toys include a drum, a trumpet, a Noah's ark and spelling blocks. The children's nursery rhymes have changed somewhat. "Broken Bridges" has become "London Bridge"; "Ding Dong Bell" has replaced "Jacke, boy"; and "Dapple Grey" runs:

"I had a little pony,
His name was Dapple Grey.
I lent him to a lady,
To ride a mile away."

There is no mention now of an alehouse, presumably a corrupting influence on the young. But since in the continuation of the rhyme the Victorian lady went on to "slash" and "whip" her mount, there was no lack of cruelty in the times.

WINTER

Painted by Pauline Baynes

MADONNA AND CHILD

By Adriaen Isenbrant

Adriaen Isenbrant was a painter of the Flemish school in the first half of the sixteenth century. He died in Bruges in 1551, where he had spent most of his life. He was a noted portraitist and the Madonna and Child is typical of his work. It was shown last summer in the exhibition of fine paintings of four centuries "From Isenbrant to Valtat," at the Hallsborough Gallery in London. Few details are known about Isenbrant, nor has it been ascertained where he learnt his art. He is something of a mystery painter and some experts have claimed it is impossible to prove he was the author of the works accredited to him. But there can be no doubt about the skill of the artist, whoever he was.

THE OLD LADIES OF THE PRECINCTS

By Francis Haydn

The Cathedral Precincts forty years ago were inhabited by an exclusive society consisting mainly of the Clergy and the Old Ladies

The Cathedral Precincts in which I spent my conscious childhood some forty years ago had an exclusive society, consisting for the most part of the clergy and their families, and the Old Ladies. Several of the Prebendaries had international reputations as scholars or theologians and their names must be remembered in learned circles. But in my memory the Old Ladies are far more vivid. They lived singly or in pairs in vast houses. The great majority of them were spinsters, Victorian survivors from the days before the emancipation of women. Their fathers had been in the professions or the Services or, occasionally, from branches of the aristocracy and had left their daughters well-endowed with unearned increment.

Doyennes of the Old Ladies were the Misses Carteret, a pair of aged identical twins. No one could tell one from the other. With their beaky noses and sallow complexions and the tall hats and blue cloaks which they invariably affected, they looked like witches in the illustrations in my copy of Grimm's *Fairy Tales*. They lived in a magnificent Jacobean mansion, one of the finest of its kind in the country. Only the privileged few were familiar with the interior, for the Misses Carteret refused to recognise the existence of anyone in the Precincts until they had lived there five years. My mother told me that precisely five years from the day of her and my father's arrival the twin sisters paid their first call, opening the conversation with the remark, " Now you have *begun* to settle in, we feel we should become acquainted."

Another huge house, but older and rambling, was the Chancery, so called because in the late Middle Ages the King's Chancellor had stayed there when the monarch was in residence in his Royal palace outside the city. Most of the Chancery dated from the fourteenth or fifteenth centuries and no two rooms were on the same level. One was perpetually going up three stairs or down two along the dark, narrow corridors. The tenants were Miss Orme and her widowed sister, Mrs. Beverly-Morphew. Miss Orme was not the only Old Lady to be deaf and to employ an ear-trumpet. This was an instrument with a circular aperture at the speaking end, into which one shouted and bawled while Miss Orme rattled the whole thing up and down, presumably to adjust it acoustically. Mrs. Beverly-Morphew's life centred on her dogs, six or eight of them, poms, poodle and pekes, the nastiest canine collection I have ever known. They were over-fed and under-exercised, pampered and spoilt. I have scars on my legs in memory of them, for a hazard of the house was tripping over what my father called " those pestilential animals."

Miss Fotheringay had what was by Precincts' standards a modern home—it was Queen Anne period. She wore Homburg hats, pince-nez, tweeds and bone-ribbed white blouses coming high up the neck. Her large and beautiful garden was her pride. On summer evenings the borders of Mrs. Sinkins and the beds of roses produced a wonderful smell of pot-pourri. Miss Fotheringay was our Precincts' blue stocking. She read the *Morning Post* from first to last pages each day. She was happiest when she was combining her two interests and, standing in her front garden waving secateurs in a leather-gloved hand, could call out to the passer-by—it might be the Bishop: " You saw what the *Post* had to say, Dr. Proudie, about George and that Churchill this morning." (This was a reference to the then Prime Minister and to Mr. Churchill, who had yet to be forgiven for his switch from the Conservatives to the Liberals in the days of " dear Mr. Balfour.")

Each Old Lady of the Precincts had her own individuality and one appreciated this when they assembled together for Matins in the Cathedral on Sunday mornings. They sat in the front row of the Nave, below the pulpit,

(Continued on following pages)

Miss Vaughan sings the Wedding Hymn, to my mother's accompaniment on the piano

Miss Fotheringay. "Her beautiful garden was her pride"

THE OLD LADIES OF THE PRECINCTS

(*Continued from previous page*)

the seats being regarded as theirs by right. Each lady made her stately entry along the centre Nave aisle. Last to come, a minute or so before the choir procession, was Miss Vaughan. We accepted her as part of our society, but strangers would rub their eyes and nudge each other, wondering whether they were seeing a ghost. For Miss Vaughan was dressed in the fashion of the 1830's. She was immensely old, no one knew her exact age but our Precincts' family doctor estimated her to be nearer ninety than eighty. She tottered up the aisle, a slight, feather-like figure, with a large flat round hat surmounting pure white ringletted hair, a brightly coloured jacket—trimmed with fur in winter—a striped skirt and thin shoes which I was convinced were bedroom slippers. I never saw her in an overcoat. Her hands were always hidden in a little white fur muff and her rheumy, watery eyes gazed straight ahead, seeing what ? The story was that many, many years previously Miss Vaughan had come to the Cathedral to be married and that midway through the service the bridegroom had had a seizure and fallen dead. This had deranged her mind and since her mother had not approved the match she had felt it a duty to wear for the rest of her life the fashions of her mother's younger days. The clothes incidentally were made for her by a dressmaker in the city.

The only evidence which I can adduce for the Vaughan legend is that this old lady would never attend a marriage service. If she were invited to a wedding she would come on the appointed day to see my mother who would take her into our drawing-room and accompany her on the piano for a singing of the Wedding Hymn. Standing outside in the hall I would hear quavering tones raised in:

"The voice that breathed o'er Eden,
That earliest wedding day. . ."

On Sunday mornings the bellringers went on with their peals until Miss Vaughan was in her seat. Then Matins could begin. Sitting immediately below the pulpit, the Old Ladies were the "critics' circle" for the preacher. If they regarded the subject matter of the sermon to be unsuitable, they did not hesitate to show their disapproval. Ear-trumpets would be noisily adjusted, the chains on which pince-nez were attached to dresses pulled out and let back, reticules and other paraphernalia rattled, umbrellas or parasoles tapped on the stone floor. The sounds reverberating in the Gothic arches became a din. The standard required in a sermon was "preaching out of the Bible and not out of the newspapers." (Miss Fotheringay had no objection to a mention of the *Morning Post* because she regarded it as an additional book of Holy Writ.) Not infrequently in the Vestry after the service, an Archdeacon could be heard saying to the preacher: "I'm afraid your sermon raised a salvo from the Ear-trumpet Brigade."

Attendance at Cathedral services was an essential part of the Old Ladies' routine. So was tea. For social purposes it was the main meal of the day. On most afternoons they all met, including Mrs. Beverly-Morphew and her dogs, in some drawing-room to discuss developments in the Precincts. Conversation might follow such lines as these:

"Her behaviour is most peculiar"
"They say her father was in Trade."
"Ah, well, that explains it."

or:

"I hear our new Minor Canon is well connected."

"Yes he's one of the Herefordshire branch of the family, not that Yorkshire lot."

"Then he must have preferment."

"They say" and "I hear" were the main news agencies of the Precincts.

At Christmas time the Old Ladies gave children's parties. The Misses Carteret entertained those of us whose parents came within the five years' residence rule and also the Cathedral choristers who had to stay at school to sing the Christmas services and could hardly be expected to qualify in the time limit. (But when a new Headmaster of the Choir School was appointed he had to wait the statutory five years before being invited.)

After an enormous meal in the dining-room, surrounded by portraits of Carteret ancestors looking out from above Grinling Gibbons mantelpieces, one of our hostesses—we never knew which it was—would call out "each little boy take a girl." In Eton suits or silk dresses, we would troop up the wide staircase to the Large Drawing-Room. There space had somehow been cleared among the Victorian bric-à-brac, which normally cluttered every square foot, for rows of chairs to be placed for us to be diverted by the conjuror. The same man came every year and his programme never altered. He started with a trick requiring a couple of water bottles. His opening words in his rather affected voice were:

Mrs. Beverly-Morphew's dogs were "the nastiest canine collection I have ever known"

The Old Ladies sat at Matins in the front row immediately below the pulpit. Severe critics of sermons, they were known to the clergy as the " Ear-trumpet Brigade "

" I do my trick with two decantahs " and he ended the proceedings to our delighted gasps by producing the rabbit from the top hat.

As might be expected, Miss Fotheringay's party was a more strenuous affair. We played " Turn the trencher " and " Blind man's buff." Miss Fotheringay kept up a running commentary. " Butterfingers " or " You Juggins " and erupted with deep laughter when anyone tripped over a piece of bamboo or brass furniture. Her father had been a General in the Indian Army.

Some of the Old Ladies preferred to have smaller parties to which they invited us in batches of half a dozen. Miss Beddoes was one in this category. She was a little, broad-beamed old maid with the appearance of Beatrix Potter's Mrs. Tiggie Winkle, without the hedgehog spikes. She was one of several Old Ladies who still maintained her own carriage. A motor car was something of a rarity in the Precincts in 1920. Miss Beddoes' coachman was a surly villain named Noakes. He blatantly swindled her on her fodder and other stable accounts. He was fortunate in having a mistress who was the soul of charity. If it was pointed out to her that her stable bills for the quarter would be regarded as excessive for a squadron of cavalry, she would dismiss the complaint with, " it's one of Noakes' peculiarities, you know." Another of his excused " peculiarities " was to keep up a string of very audible coarse oaths as he drove her about the countryside.

Tea with Miss Beddoes was an unforgettable experience. We gathered in the dining-room and listened to the playing of the musical box. Of the twelve tunes the first was " The Bluebells of Scotland " and the last Boccherini's Minuet. Our hostess presided at the head of the table and made the tea herself from water boiled in the silver kettle over the spirit lamp. Before the infusion was poured out, each cup was warmed with water. Crumpets and muffins from heated dishes were followed by scones and honey and a variety of iced cakes served from tiered stands. After tea we adjourned to the drawing-room to play National Gallery. This was a card game in which one collected sets of cards of famous paintings by individual famous artists. " Have you Gainsborough's Blue Boy ?" " No, but have you Turner's Fighting Temeraire ?... Thank you. And have you, I wonder, Landseer's Dignity and Impudence." On some of the set cards the names of certain pictures had been scored out in heavy black ink and the cards removed from the pack. It was impossible to see the titles but presumably the paintings were concerned with nudes or some other aspect of Art which Miss Beddoes considered objectionable.

Mrs. Whipple was another who invited us in half-dozens. Hers was a small house, reputedly designed by Wren. The main entertainment, besides the excellent food, was a game called " Coffee Pots." We would nowadays call it a quiz. You thought of some animate or inanimate object and were questioned about it. " Is your coffee pot round ?" Does it have legs ?" Mrs. Whipple could guess the answer after two or three questions. Today she would have made a fortune on Twenty Questions or similar programmes.

All the Old Ladies were attended by armies of servants who carried scuttles of coals up innumerable flights of stairs for open fires—how the National Coal Board would have approved—and brass jugs of hot water for washing and bathing. Plumbing was elementary. In each household there was an elderly maid, a faithful retainer who presided over domestic affairs. They were always referred to as though they were the private property of their mistresses; Miss Fotheringay's Alice, or Mrs. Whipple's Mabel. They were an integral part of the Precincts and when they opened the front door one spent a minute talking with them, inquiring after their health or other relevant matters before one was announced to the mistress. As a child I knew these servants through the tradesman's entrance and the back door. I was familiar with what was baking day in any particular household and often I would pass an hour munching cakes fresh from the oven in a steamy, sweaty kitchen where everything was cooked on a black iron, coal-fired range.

The conjuror at the Misses Carteret's Christmas party

Alice or Mabel, or whoever it might be, and their colleagues below stairs behaved naturally with us children. Bells would jingle—they worked on a complicated system of ropes and wires—and there would be trenchant remarks about " the old fool up there who couldn't even boil a kettle of water " or " I'd like my good lady to take a look at my corns." Yet if anyone else had dared to make such criticisms they would have been met with fierce counter-attacks. Servants' wages were £25 or £30 a year. But they would have felt deeply insulted had you tried to put a price on their loyalty.

Recently I revisited the Precincts for the first time for many years. Cars were parked everywhere, the fees from parking producing much needed income for the upkeep of the Cathedral fabric. The Chancery has been converted into a series of maisonettes and Miss Beddoes' house is now flats (all mod. con., central heating). I thought I heard the growl of oaths from the eight garages which occupy the site of the latter's stables, but it turned out to be the sound of a car engine being tuned. I glimpsed babies nappies hanging on a line above what used to be Miss Fotheringay's rose garden.

The Misses Carteret's mansion is a scheduled historic monument and open to the public on three afternoons a week. I paid my money to look round. The right period furniture has been brought in and one can properly see the splendid proportions of the Jacobean interior. I'd never noticed them before. Nevertheless in the Large Drawing-Room there seemed to be a voice whispering " I do my trick with two decantahs "—or was it the wind ? They always used to say the Precincts were haunted. Now I know ghosts walk there.

CUSTOMS AND

Drawn by

Carols are sung today with as much fervour as in past centuries and they are one of the unchanging aspects of Christmas. The word originally meant a ring dance with a song, and in the Middle Ages people sang them as they danced round the cribs in churches. Some of the most famous of the Latin Christmas hymns were written to dance tunes. The ceremony of the Yule log derives from a pagan Scandinavian custom of kindling huge bonfires at the winter solstice. It may no longer be a fashion at Christmas, but in the Middle Ages its arrival as it was dragged into the baronial hall was an occasion for great rejoicing. Not all the log was burnt. Some charred wood was kept throughout the year as an " insurance " for the house against fire.

Christmas trees were introduced into Britain from Germany by William IV's wife, Queen Adelaide. They did not become a fashion until the

FESTIVITIES

J. S. Goodall

reign of Queen Victoria. Prince Albert is generally credited with popularising them. The nineteenth century also saw the development of the Christmas pantomime in Britain. The stock characters were Columbine, Harlequin, Pantaloon and Clown. The concluding harlequinade is nowadays rarely seen but no Victorian family would have regarded the pantomime as complete without it.

Masques were an earlier form of Christmas drama. These elaborate compositions of music, dancing and dialogue had their greatest vogue in the days of Queen Elizabeth I and King James I. Earlier still, in medieval times, mummers provided the seasonal entertainment. Wearing masks and dressed in fantastic costumes and sometimes disguised as animals, the performances of the mummers were an essential part of the Christmas revels in baronial halls and humbler homes.

THE BOXING DAY MEET

by Brian Vesey-Fitzgerald

" The 'oss loves the 'ound and I loves both." But these were not, as a superficial reading of the novels might suggest, the sum total of Mr. Jorrocks's loves. There was another. No, not the fox—" Oh, how that beautiful word, fox, gladdens my 'eart, and warns the declinin' embers of my age ! "—but food. Mr. Jorrocks loved his " witals," and knew them too. Not that he was a gourmet—he had not that niceness of knowledge; though he would undoubtedly have agreed wholeheartedly with whoever said that

> . . . civilized man's besetting sin
> is bunging food in a bloody tin

—and he was certainly not a glutton. He was simply a good trencherman. He had a big frame and he believed in keeping it well filled. And he lived in an age when men " ate 'earty " anyway.

You may remember the dinner party in *Handley Cross*. On that occasion Mr. Jorrocks sat down to a round of beef with dumplings and boiled turnips, a turkey, reindeer tongue and sausages, rissoles and stewed celery, pigs' feet, cold veal-pie, partridges and snipe and chipped potatoes, tartlets, red herrings and cheese—each, mark you, a separate course—and, *between courses*, black pudding and *pâté de foie gras*. The whole was washed down with champagne. A very considerable spread, you may think. And yet, you will remember, this was not a very special dinner-party. Mr. Jorrocks, in fact, did not think very much of it. He was not at all impressed either with the company—or the food.

Which makes me wonder what sort of a meal Mr. Jorrocks was accustomed to sit down to on Christmas Day, a very special occasion; a festive occasion then as it is now, even in the hey-day of the besetting sin. We do not know: Surtees makes no mention of it. But at least we can be sure that, on Christmas Day, Mr. Jorrocks sat down to a meal that would make that dinner-party seem like a fast.

And what did Mr. Jorrocks do on Boxing Day ? Again, we do not know: Surtees does not tell us. Indeed, Surtees makes no mention at all of Boxing Day, which suggests that on that day Mr. Jorrocks was still sleeping it off. But I feel sure that Mr. Jorrocks was not doing anything of the sort. I feel sure that he hunted on Boxing Day.

Mr. Pomponius Ego attends a meet with Mr. Jorrocks—one of John Leech's illustrations from *Handley Cross*

Not the traditional Boxing Day Meet, of course. Had that been so, then Surtees would surely have mentioned it. No, Mr. Jorrocks would have hunted on Boxing Day just because hunting was his ruling passion; and he would have thought it good for his digestion, too. But it would have been a bye-day, nothing very serious. Just a bit of a jog-trot for 'oss and 'ound and Master—" Are you a hard rider, Mr. Jorrocks ? " " 'Ardest in England, mum; may say that for I never goes off the 'ard road if I can 'elp it "—and any friends who felt energetic enough to get astride a horse after the Christmas orgy.

The simple truth is that " the traditional Boxing Day Meet " is not so very traditional. It is post-Surtees. Indeed, comparatively modern, for it is post-Edwardian, post-" The Golden Age of Foxhunting," which may be said to have ended about 1910, though the after-glow lingered on until 1914. " Happy are they who go out to please themselves, and not to astonish others," remarked Mr. " Facey " Romford. Substitute the word " impress " for " astonish " and you have the reason for " the traditional Boxing Day Meet." It is

Last season—the Cotswold Hunt meet at the
Left: The animated scene as the Garth meet

Mr. Jorrocks is hunted by a bull, another illustration from Surtees' book

Mr. Pigg is involved in a *contretemps* with a melon frame

held to impress the townsman. It is a window-dressing affair, and a symptom of foxhunting's unease: forced upon it by a well-organised and highly-vociferous minority, who wish to see the sport banned. " Happy are they who go out to please themselves." No longer do you find foxhunters with the courage to admit that they hunt for the pleasure it brings them. Oh no: now they hunt for all sorts of worthy reasons. Shades of Meynell, Osbaldeston Assheton-Smith—and Mr. Jorrocks !

However, do not let us get all serious about it. The very last thing that a Boxing Day Meet is, is serious. It has not, in fact, altered a jot from Mr. Jorrocks's bye-day. We may not eat and drink quite as much now as they did then, but we still do ourselves pretty well at Christmas: much too well to relish the idea of a hard gallop over stiff country on the following day. A gentle jog-trot round the lanes in the Jorrocks manner—" I never goes off the 'ard road if I can 'elp it "—is the limit of most of those who attend the Boxing Day Meet mounted. How do I know ? Well, to be honest, I don't. I, having done myself well on Christmas Day, attend the Boxing Day Meet on foot. But . . . well, come to think of it, that is just how I do know !

I would not miss the Boxing Day Meet for worlds. It is, by far, the best-attended meet of the year. Not by hunting people—or rather, the mounted field is smaller (and younger) than usual, though many regular followers, who would be mounted but for that Christmas dinner, turn up in cars—but by townspeople. (The Boxing Day Meet, being an exercise in window-dressing, is usually held in a town.) The townspeople turn out because it is a free show, and it is well known that the English will walk miles to see something for nothing. And, let there be no doubt about it, the Boxing Day Meet is a wonderful spectacle.

There may not be as many " pink " coats present as at an ordinary Saturday meet—that Christmas dinner again !—but there will be sufficient. And what is more beautiful than a good hunter, well-groomed, and the leathers gleaming ?

> There's never a bird on the heather,
> There's never a stag in the pass,
> That can hold a man's heart in a tether,
> Like a horse and a handful of leather.
> What more beautiful than the hounds?
> Intent, wise, dipping, trotting, straying,
> Smiling at people, shoving, playing,
> Nosing to children's faces, waving
> Their feathery sterns, and all behaving.

And what more beautiful than a pretty girl on a good horse ? No wonder the townsfolk turn out. And turn out they do, in force. Husbands in their best Sunday suits, their wives in fur (or near fur) coats, nylons, stiletto-heels, the lot; sweethearts and those in search of sweethearts; schoolchildren; babies in prams and nursemaids; pedigree pekes and assorted mongrels. Most will know nothing of hunting and most have come just to stare, just for the outing. But, by the time the Field moves off, most will have some inkling that

> This is the heritage that none can take,
> The gift we hold, the gift we give again,
> And this is the spirit that no Time can break,
> So long as England and her fields remain.

And what of the Field itself ? One thing must strike even the most casual observer at once; and that is the great preponderance of women, most of them of marriageable age. This is so, of course, at all meets throughout the season: but it is particularly evident at the Boxing Day Meet.

Why is this ? Well, of course it is true that young women are taught to ride nowadays for just the same reason that their grandmothers were taught to play the piano: it is a social accomplishment, a step up the social ladder. But, surely, that alone is not sufficient to account for the modern young female's passion for foxhunting. Let Surtees speak:

Hunting men are all supposed to be rich, and as very few ladies are aware that a horse can't hunt every day in the week, they just class the whole " genus " fourteen-horse power men, ten-horse power men, five-horse power men, two-horse power men, together, and tying them in a bunch, label it " very rich," and proceed to take measures accordingly.

Times may have changed. But that is one idea that certainly has not. Did I say that there was no serious hunting on Boxing Day ? I withdraw.

And what of the fox, the focal point of all this ? Well, this is the one day you have no need to feel sorry for the fox. It is a day off for him, too. He has nothing to worry about on Boxing Day: thanks to that Christmas dinner.

Old Frogmill Coaching Inn, near Andoversford, in Gloucestershire. on Boxing Day in the Market Place in Wokingham, Berkshire

Mr. Jorrocks holds his breath as a fox disappears into the undergrowth

HORSEMAN IN A WOOD

By Alasdair Alpin MacGregor

There hangs at the National Gallery, in London, a Corot measuring no more than 15⅜ by 11¾ ins. It is entitled "A Horseman (M. Pivot) in a Wood." The horseman depicted was Corot's neighbour and patron, M. Pivot, on whose estate, at Ville d'Avray, Corot, granted permission to roam as he liked, executed a great number of his sketches and landscape paintings.

M. Pivot was in the habit of riding over his property in the morning. On one such occasion Corot observed him going through a wood. Struck by the effect of the grey mount and its rider's pale yellow hat against the foliage, he asked his patron to halt a moment in order that he might sketch the scene. M. Pivot, swift to perceive that the result had possibilities, commissioned Corot to complete it as a serious example of his work. This Corot did; and in due course M. Pivot received an acceptable portrait of himself on horseback.

Shortly afterwards, M. Pivot consented to Corot adding some finishing touches. This explained how, at Corot's death in 1875, this picture, then found in his studio, was mistakenly included that same year in the Corot sale. It was withdrawn, however, and duly restored to M. Pivot.

Incidentally, it had not received from Corot the proposed touches. At M. Pivot's death it passed to his niece, Madame Coffignon. At her death it went to her son, Edmond, with whom it remained until 1919, the year Percyval Tudor-Hart bought it from Edmond in the manner to be related. Edmond, right up to the time of his pathetic death in 1920, remained one of Tudor-Hart's most intimate friends.

By courtesy of the Trustees of the National Gallery

"A Horseman (M. Pivot) in a Wood." The painting, by Corot, in the National Gallery, London

Tudor-Hart had known this little Corot since 1892, when he made the acquaintance of the Coffignon family in Paris through a certain Albert Renou, an associate of his at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Edmond was then studying at Julian's Academy. The picture, though showing evidence of having been re-varnished on a number of occasions, appeared in reasonably good condition. Nevertheless, the varnish did show some discolouration, and in places had lost its transparency. In 1893 the picture was again varnished with mastic, superimposed on the old varnish.

Five years later, Tudor-Hart drew Edmond's attention to a number of cracks in his Corot. This deterioration Tudor-Hart attributed to the contractive action of the varnish. In addition, the canvas was sagging on its stretcher. Since Tudor-Hart's own experiments with oils and varnishes in the 1890's were still very much in their elementary stages, Edmond did not have sufficient confidence in him to allow him to rectify these defects.

A couple of years later, and contrary to Tudor-Hart's advice, Edmond had his Corot once more re-varnished with mastic. At the outset this seemed to improve its general appearance, but soon its condition had worsened and by 1912 Edmond was seeking his friend's advice. Tudor-Hart examined the Corot to find that the mastic varnish had sunk through the cracks into the canvas, which was deeply stained. The paint looked as though it were in the first stages of scaling. The old varnish had dulled and become sugary in appearance, altering considerably the values and the effect of the modelling. Several photographs taken of the Corot at this time show in detail and in tone values what the picture then looked like.

Convinced at last that the mastic varnish had been a mistake, Edmond was only too anxious that Percyval Tudor-Hart should clean his Corot—should remove the old varnish, and oil the picture out. The outbreak of the war in 1914 denied him the opportunity of doing so. He was not to see the Corot again until the spring of 1919, by which time the varnish had darkened considerably, obscuring completely the details of the wood behind the horse and horseman. Moreover, the horseman's hat had turned a deep, raw sienna; and no difference of colour between his trousers and his grey mount was distinguishable. Both had deteriorated to a deep amber. Further, it was impossible any longer to detect any shade of difference between the various greens of grass and foliage. These were now a dull, uniform olive-green of a brownish hue. The cracks were wider; and the dust and dirt occupying them appeared as black lines. In places the paint was so parched and cockled as to render impossible the hanging of the picture in such a way as to avoid a sheen.

In 1919 Percyval Tudor-Hart cleaned and reconditioned the Corot. Evidence of the thoroughness with which he did so lies before me in a typescript of some 3,000 words which he left behind. This concludes with instructions for such treatment as the Corot might require forty or fifty years later. Into the minutiæ of this we need not enter here, since they are rather too technical. They may be referred to in documents preserved in the National Gallery's archives, and in Mr. Martin Davies's *National Gallery Catalogues: French School*, revised in 1957.

An interesting piece of private history regarding "A Horseman in a Wood" must now be related.

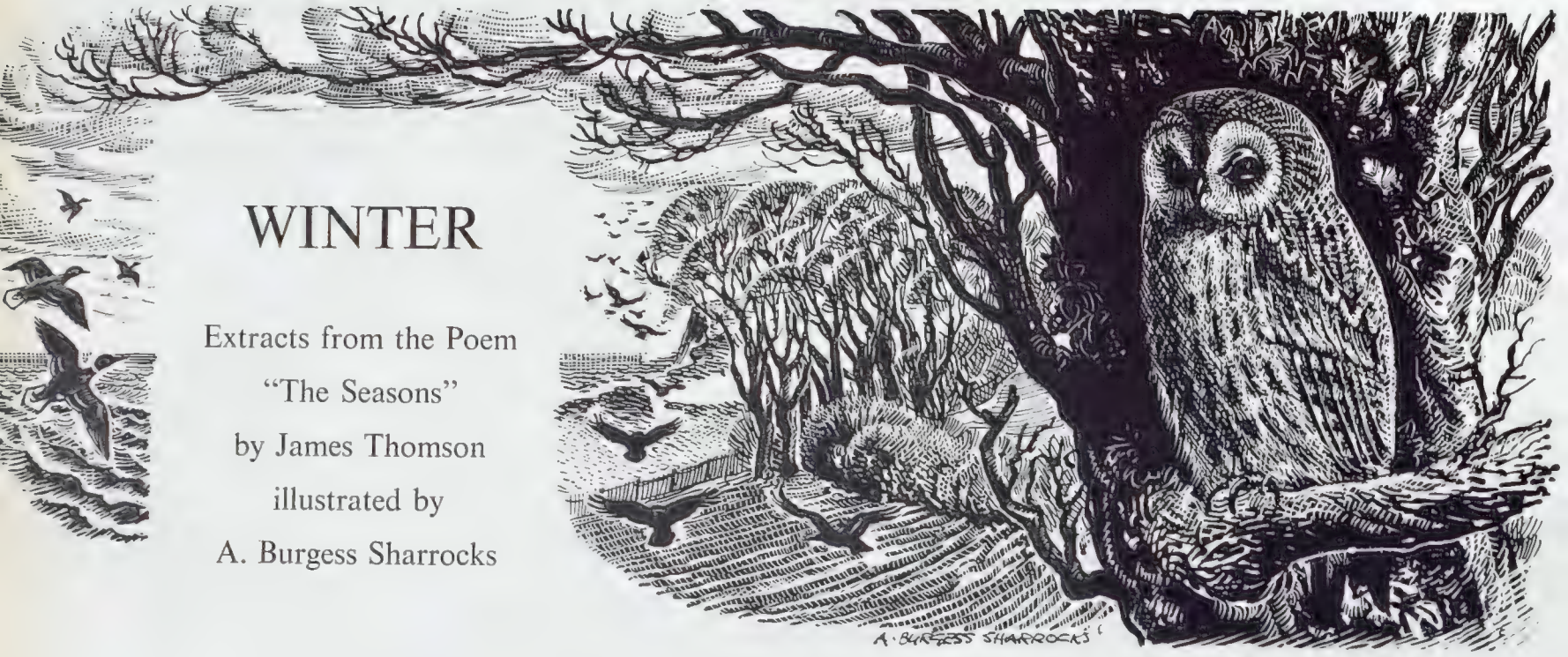
Edmond Coffignon, Percyval Tudor-Hart's contemporary at Julian's Academy, had fallen on evil days. Chronic dissipations had undermined his physique long since, and were now affecting his reason. Yet the friendship continued unbroken to the end of Edmond's life, though sometimes under exacting circumstances for Tudor-Hart, who, quite early, perceived a steady decline in his condition, and had been obliged to succour him on more than one occasion. The pathos of Edmond's dissolution is seen in the bundles of letters he wrote Tudor-Hart over the years from his home at Blois, half of them in French, half in English. All are in the weirdest handwriting, like a Chinese script Edmond had invented for himself. Few lack evidence of his worsening and condition. The accounts he gives of his wartime plight in the France of 1915 and 1916 are pathetic. How could he lay in some coal against the approaching winter when he couldn't pay for it? Could Tudor-Hart help with a loan? Could they meet in Paris and discuss, yet again, the sorry state of Edmond's affairs? If so, how soon? Matters were urgent.

(Continued on page 44)

Photograph by John Topham

WINTER ROBE OF PUREST WHITE

Extracts from "The Seasons" by James Thomson are on the following page



WINTER

Extracts from the Poem
"The Seasons"
by James Thomson
illustrated by
A. Burgess Sharrocks

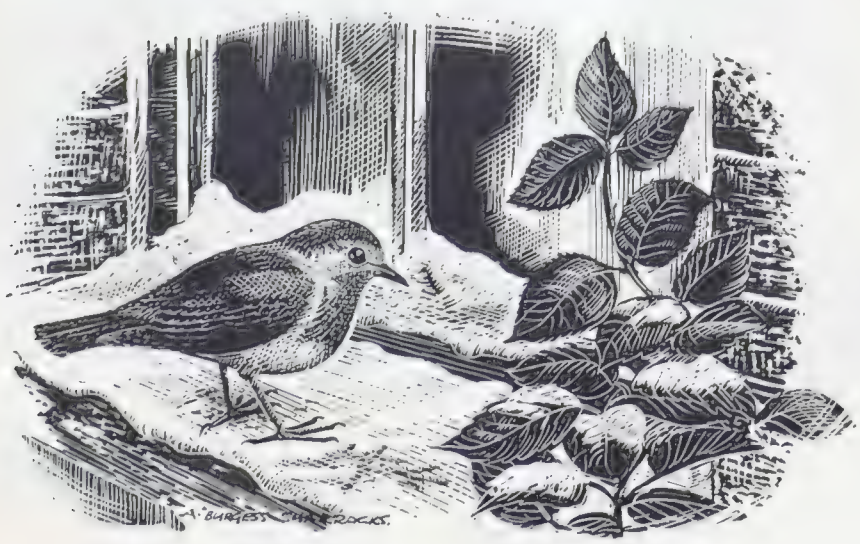
Wide o'er the brim, with many a torrent swelled,
And the mixed ruin of its banks o'erspread,
At last the roused-up river pours along:
Resistless, roaring, dreadful, down it comes,
From the rude mountain and the mossy wild,
Tumbling through rocks abrupt, and sounding far;
Then o'er the sanded valley floating spreads,
Calm, sluggish, silent; till again, constrained
Between two meeting hills, it bursts a way
Where rocks and woods o'erhang the turbid stream;
There, gathering triple force, rapid and deep,
It boils, and wheels, and foams, and thunders through.

Snatched in short eddies, plays the withered leaf;
And on the flood the dancing feather floats.
With broadened nostrils to the sky upturned,
The conscious heifer snuffs the stormy gale.
Even, as the matron, at her nightly task,
With pensive labour draws the flaxen thread,
The wasted taper and the crackling flame
Foretell the blast. But chief the plumy race,
The tenants of the sky, its changes speak.
Retiring from the downs, where all day long
They picked their scanty fare, a blackening train
Of clamorous rooks thick-urge their weary flight,
And seek the closing shelter of the grove.
Assiduous, in his bower, the wailing owl
Plies his sad song. The cormorant on high
Wheels from the deep, and screams along the land.
Loud shrieks the soaring hern: and with wild wing
The circling sea-fowl cleave the flaky clouds.

. . . The sky saddens with the gathered storm.
Through the hushed air the whitening shower descends,
At first thin-wavering; till at last the flakes
Fall broad and wide and fast, dimming the day
With a continual flow. . . Low the woods
Bow their hoar head; and, ere the languid sun
Faint from the west emits his evening ray,
Earth's universal face, deep-hid and chill,
Is one wild dazzling waste, that buries wide
The works of man. Drooping, the labourer-ox
Stands covered o'er with snow, and then demands
The fruit of all his toil. The fowls of heaven,
Tamed by the cruel season, crowd around
The winnowing store, and claim the little boon
Which Providence assigns them. One alone,
The redbreast, sacred to the household gods,
Wisely regardful of the embroiling sky,
In joyless fields and thorny thickets leaves
His shivering mates, and pays to trusted man
His annual visit. Half-afraid, he first
Against the window beats; then brisk alights
On the warm hearth; then, hopping o'er the floor,
Eyes all the smiling family askance,
And pecks, and starts, and wonders where he is—
Till, more familiar grown, the table-crumbs
Attract his slender feet. The foodless wilds
Pour forth their brown inhabitants. The hare,
Though timorous of heart, and hard beset
By death in various forms, dark snares, and dogs,
And more unpitying men, the garden seeks,
Urged on by fearless want. The bleating kind
Eye the bleak heaven, and next the glistening earth,
With looks of dumb despair; then, sad-dispers'd,
Dig for the withered herb through heaps of snow.

Meantime the village rouses up the fire;
While, well attested, and as well believed,
Heard solemn, goes the goblin-story round,
Till superstitious horror creeps o'er all.
Or frequent in the sounding hall they wake
The rural gambol. Rustic mirth goes round —
The simple joke that takes the shepherd's heart,
Easily pleased; the long loud laugh sincere;
The kiss, snatched hasty from the sidelong maid
On purpose guardless, or pretending sleep;
The leap, the slap, the haul; and, shook to notes
Of native music, the respondent dance.

From pole to pole the rigid influence falls
Through the still night incessant, heavy, strong,
And seizes nature fast. It freezes on,
Till morn, late-rising o'er the drooping world,
Lifts her pale eye unjoyous. Then appears
The various labour of the silent night—
Prone from the dripping eve, and dumb cascade,
Whose idle torrents only seem to roar,
The pendent icicle; the frost-work fair,
Where transient hues and fancied figures rise;
Wide-spouted o'er the hill the frozen brook,
A livid tract, cold-gleaming on the morn;
The forest bent beneath the plumy wave;
And by the frost refined the whiter snow
Incrusted hard, and sounding to the tread
Of early shepherd, as he pensive seeks
His pining flock, or from the mountain-top,
Pleased with the slippery surface, swift descends . . .
Behold, fond man! . . .
Thy flowering Spring, thy Summer's ardent strength,
Thy sober Autumn fading into age,
And pale concluding Winter comes at last
And shuts the scene . . .



The Green Knight rides over the bridge into Camelot Castle on New Year's Day

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

Paintings by William McLaren

It is generally agreed that Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is one of the great medieval poems. Unfortunately, it was written by its fourteenth-century anonymous author, who lived probably in the reign of Richard II, in a form of Middle English which is almost impossible to understand without a glossary and some specialised knowledge. There is, however, a modern English prose version by M. R. Ridley, published by Edmund Ward in 1944. This presents the poem in a readily accessible form.

The story starts swiftly. After the author has set the scene for a banquet held by King Arthur on New Year's Day, he introduces Arthur, Guinevere, Sir Gawain and the other knights making merry in the great hall. Arthur is restless to hear of a strange tale. His wish for a great wonder is gratified as soon as the trumpets have sounded a fanfare to signal that the banquet may begin—

"But the notes had hardly died away when there swung in at the hall door a fearsome warrior, the tallest of all on earth. From the neck to the waist he was so thick-set and squarely built, and he was so long in flank and limb, that one might have thought he was half a giant; but he was in fact a man, as mighty as any horse could bear in the saddle, but yet shapely in his mightiness, burly in back and breast, but slender in the waist and with clean-run limbs. They were all amazed at his colour, for they saw that he was bright green all over.

"His clothes were green, too. He wore a plain close-fitting coat of green, and over that a gay green mantle, lined with close-trimmed white fur. . . . He rode a huge green horse; his mane and his tail, green as the rest of him, were curled and combed and plaited with

Continued on following page

"Light down and eat with us." King Arthur welcomes the Green Knight in the Banqueting Hall

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

Continued from preceding page

thread-of-gold, and adorned with emeralds. . . .

"They all looked at him in wonder, as he sat there on his great horse, flashing and bright as the lightning; and they thought that if it came to fighting there could be no man in the world who could withstand him, so mighty a warrior he seemed. But he wore no armour. . . . In one hand he held a bunch of holly, the tree that stays greenest of all when the leaves fall from others in autumn. But in the other hand he grasped his one weapon, and a terrible enough weapon it was, a prodigious battle-axe, with a spike sticking out beyond the head. . . ."

The Green Knight rides up the hall, looking for Arthur, while all the knights and their ladies hold their breath in astonishment at him. Arthur welcomes the strange knight and asks him to stay and eat, but the Green Knight refuses, saying that he has heard of Arthur's renown and has come looking for sport, a Christmas game. His offer is that if there is anybody bold enough in the hall to exchange blows with him, he would give him his battle-axe. The challenger is allowed the first blow. Silence follows and the knight becomes scornful that no one takes up his challenge. Arthur, ashamed, says that he will answer. But Gawain asks if he might be given leave to answer instead.

"Gawain went to the Green Knight with the battle-axe in hand, and the Knight waited for him, calm and undismayed, and spoke to

Gawain. 'Before we go forward with this business, let us say over again our covenant. First, I ask you, sir, tell me truly your name.'

"'I am called Gawain,' he said, 'I that am to deal you this buffet, whatever happens later; and a year from today I will come, and no man else with me, and you shall deal me another blow in return, and with what weapon you will.'

"And the Green Knight answered, 'Sir Gawain, so may I thrive as I am wondrously eager that you shall let drive at me. By God, sir, I am glad that it is from your hand I am to get what I asked for here; and you have exactly rehearsed, point by point, all the covenant that I sought of the King, except this:—Promise me, on your honour, that at the year's end you yourself will come, and seek me out, wherever you think I may be found, and take from me the wages for whatever you deal me today before this noble company.'"

The Green Knight's last point means that Gawain has to go on a quest to find him, arriving at the end of the following year. The two of them then prepare for the contest. . . .

"The Green Knight at once took up his stance, with his head a little bent, and his long hair thrown forward over the crown of his head, so that the naked flesh of his neck showed ready for the stroke. Gawain gripped his axe, and put his left foot forward to get his balance; then he hove up the axe above his head and brought it down swiftly and surely on the bare flesh, so that the sharp steel shore clean through the flesh and the bones and clove his neck in two, and the bright blade drove on and bit into the ground. The fair head fell from the neck and rolled among the feasters,

Continued on following page

Sir Gawain swings his axe before decapitating the Green Knight

Arthur reassures Guinevere after the Green Knight has ridden away

SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

Continued from preceding page

who pushed it away with their feet. The blood spurted from the body and shone bright on the green mantle. The Green Knight did not fall nor even stagger, but strode firmly forward among the knights, and laid hold of his fair head and lifted it up. Then he turned to his horse, gathered the reins, put his foot in the stirrup-iron and swung himself into the saddle. He held his head by the hair, in his hand, and settled himself in his seat as calmly as though nothing had happened to him, though he sat there headless; and he turned himself about, his gruesome bleeding trunk, and many were in dread of him before he had ended what he had to say.

"For he held the head in his hand, and turned it so it faced full at the guests on the high table. And the eyelids lifted, and the eyes gazed at them wide open; and the lips moved, and the head spoke.

"'Sir Gawain, be prompt to come as you have promised, and seek faithfully till you find me, as you have sworn now in this hall in the hearing of these knights. Make your way to the Green Chapel, I charge you, to receive such a blow as you have just dealt—well you deserve it—to be promptly paid on the morning of next New Year's day. For men know me as the Knight of the Green Chapel. Seek therefore to find me and fail not, but come, or be called recreant for ever.'

"With that he gave a roar, and wheeled his horse, and flung out at the hall door with his head in his hand, and the sparks flashed from the flints beneath his horse's hooves."

The poet then goes on to describe Sir Gawain's quest for the strange Green Knight. His journey takes a year. At last, Sir Gawain comes across a marvellous castle shimmering through the bare wintry trees. There he is made welcome by the lord, who tells him the Green Chapel is nearby and that Sir Gawain can rest in his castle over the Christmas festivities. Sir Gawain gladly agrees to this.

From the castle Gawain is shown the way to the Green Chapel, where he duly meets the Green Knight, and is subjected to his greatest test. Eventually he manages to retain his life, although not without suffering some dishonour, and returns to the court of Arthur. The poem is full of enchanting glimpses of knights riding on horseback through enamelled, formal landscapes, of beautiful women waving sadly from turret windows, and of strange, dream-like magical happenings.

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JOUSTING AT A TOURNAMENT

The illustration of two knights locked in combat at a tournament comes from an early fifteenth century French manuscript. It reveals much of the detail and excitement of the joust, perhaps the most typical custom of the age of chivalry. Watching in the background are a row of well-born ladies; it is possible that the knights were carrying the favours of two of them, having bound themselves according to the chivalric code to serve them and fight in their honour. Exemplar of the elaborate code of "courtoisie" was Sir Gawain, one of King Arthur's knights of the Round Table. Stories and legends about the Round Table abounded in France and England. One example is *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The reign of Richard II (1367-1400), was an era when the chivalric codes still held sway over the aristocracy of England. During his reign was held perhaps the most famous joust of all time—the Lists of Coventry—between the Duke of Hereford and the Duke of Norfolk, when Richard solved a crisis by means of the Code of Chivalry

Christmas Time in London

A famous landmark on one of the department stores of Oxford Street

The clock, surmounted by St. George and the Dragon, is a feature of a long-established and famous store situated in Regent Street

Shoppers thronging the large stores of Oxford Street and Regent Street doing their Christmas shopping under the glittering decorations must often look up to the well-known clocks of two of the best-known of the stores. London abounds in clocks of different shapes and sizes, many of them telling slightly different times. They range in size from the best-known of all, Big Ben at Westminster, to the smaller modern timepieces decorating the facades of shops, banks and offices. Wherever the Londoner goes, from the City to the West End, he can tell the time. Many of the clocks ring out the hours as well, particularly those of churches.

The barrel clock above an old-style wine shop in the Strand. **Right:** The timepiece of a City bank and **left:** the ornate clock over the entrance of a modern City newspaper office not far from St. Paul's

"His heart was actually beating faster as he walked up to the fantastic gates with their inwrought sign of the smiling, painted King"

THE KING OF DIAMONDS

By Stella Gibbons

Illustrations by Robin Jacques

Mr. Dermot Dornan, a young Irish gentleman whose profession it was to write songs and numbers for revues, was the last person to be benighted, in a broken-down car and a snow-storm, in a country lane on Christmas Eve.

He was thinking this, as, slowly and with more exertion than he really cared for, he pushed his thirty-year-old Renault through the wet and clinging dusk. Damp, he thought, is a bore, like melodrama, and I was not born for this kind of thing, any more than I am suited to this threatening yet boring era in which I happen to live. I could not dislike life more.

It was the fault of sweet old Nana, really; sweet old Nana, so well known to all his friends of stage and T.V. and screen, who sometimes served him as a Bunbury when he wanted to hide for a day or two and finish a number; whom he always visited on Christmas Eve in spite of her living in the middle of an inaccessible field in Hertfordshire, and whom he had kissed good-bye about an hour ago.

When he had emerged from the lane at the end of which her cottage stood, and driven through more twists than those in the plot of a contemporary suspense story, there had still been enough daylight to see him comfortably back to London in time for drinks with some friends at six. Now, it was almost dark.

His shoulders ached, and wet snow was running down the back of his neck. The car jolted into a rut and ran backward a couple of feet. He blew away the snow covering his mouth, and swore. He dropped his arms to his sides. This just wasn't good enough. He would push the Renault into what he could see of a hedge, and walk on until he came to somewhere that owned a telephone. It ought not to be too far away; he was only some twenty-five miles from London, although in this dim whirling world of twilit snow he might have been three hundred.

It was not so bad when once he had got rid of the car. He walked quickly; found the end of the lane; turned into a broader road where there was now a kind of light, diffused but definite, coming from God knew where (the rising moon ?) and followed the road up a hill. Bledgett ought to lie somewhere ahead.

It was a gentle hill, and the storm was undoubtedly lessening. He could begin to see the road, and the bordering hedges softly laden with snow, and white fields lying beyond, lonely and still. Not a light, not a sound but the sighing of the falling wind. The road wound up and on.

There was a moon now, a crescent, looking out bright and cold between rolling clouds. And as he drew near the top of the hill he could see lights sprinkling the distance, and, far away, a great pale red glow marking London. It was cold up here and the wind blew stronger. He shivered.

Suddenly, he knew where he was—and what was the big, lightless, silent building standing on the very summit of the hill. This was the old road to Bledgett, that used to lead —and for that matter still did—to the most famous road-house of the '20's and early '30's, *The King of Diamonds*.

Famous for a swimming-pool where chaps and lovelies had bathed together naked, and for wild gambling parties, and for its superb champagne, *The King of Diamonds* had been high fashion for ten years. Then they had made the new road—and fashion changed, as fashion does and will. The war came: *The King of Diamonds* ruled no more.

For Dermot the name was a legend, and held the very spirit of his beloved '20's. He did not really want to see it now—deserted, dark, unutterably sad, with the swimming-pool half-full of melting snow, yet it drew him. His heart was actually beating faster as he walked up to the fantastic gates with their inwrought sign of the smiling, painted King. They threw a fragile shadow 20 ft. across the paved courtyard.

There may—there must—have been broken windows and other signs of dilapidation. But the clear moonlight comforted the scene.

(Continued overleaf)

THE KING OF DIAMONDS

(Continued from page 37)

and the eyes of affectionate nostalgia saw only the gaiety and grace of the King's palace. Charleston and shingle, Michael Arlen and stockings of sheer silk, champagne and Kasha dresses . . . hullo, a light.

The caretaker, of course. The place had recently been up for sale, and presumably someone was living there and looking after it. There was certain, too, to be a telephone.

He walked up to the door and lifted the grotesque mask-like knocker.

The door opened instantly, without a sound, and such a pretty white face smiled up at him. Smoke from a cigarette in a long, long amber holder wreathed past her long, long earrings and veiled her knee-length white dress a-swing with crystal fringe. The caretaker's girl-friend ? Feeling a little faint, and with a catch of the breath, Dermot removed his cap. Behind her there were the shadows of the famous long, high room in which people had once danced, and—he could now see over her shoulder—*shapes were dancing again.*

" Hullo," she said, in a cool little croaking voice, " do come in. We 're having a party." She turned her shorn and shapely head over one shoulder. " Chaps !" she called, " here's a gate-crasher from the other—well, anyway, a visitor. Welcome to *The King of Diamonds* ! " She stood aside, so that Dermot could see into the room.

Then they came, drifting towards him on the lightest of dancing feet: the long-armed, lean girls whose floating chiffon dresses kissed their silken knees, the tall young men in white ties and tails. Their eyes were bright with the laughter of an eternal youth.

" The long-armed, lean girls whose floating chiffon dresses kissed their silken knees, the tall young men in white ties and tails.

" Her long silk legs were crossed "

" *Do* come in," implored a young man, slipping his hand (literally, the dazed visitor saw) through Dermot's arm, " and have some champagne. The supply is absolutely *unlimited.* There *are* disadvantages about this place, I suppose, but *that's* one of the *advantages*—"

" Darling Hilary," said the girl in the white dress, " you 're *so* tactless. Now you run off and dance with Peggy—*this* one's *mine.*" She smiled up at Dermot, and seized his hand, and led him away towards the famous Diamond Bar, where empty sockets once containing huge jewels of paste now glowed with a soft, peculiar, thrilling light. While the music throbbed and stammered, in the hands of a smiling orchestra, a smiling barman poured Dermot the best wine of them all, and, flinging back his head, he drank.

" Paridisal," he commented solemnly, setting down the glass, and there was a soft shout of laughter from the circle surrounding him.

" Oh I say, that's rich," sighed one of the girls. She advanced on him, with long widespread arms, but he smiled and shook his head at her as he moved away with the girl in the white dress.

Did her feet touch the floor ? He thought not, and she was so light that she followed his slightest movement. It was not like dancing with a girl at all . . . but then, he thought, afraid to breathe, almost to think, lest the moment should come to an end, she isn't. . . . *What* is she ?

She was very beautiful, to him; and charged as if by some divine essence, with the spirit of the period he loved best. He had never yet felt completely at home in any setting. But here, surrounded by these smiling faces and flying feet, he knew he was breathing his native air, and the sensation was delicious.

" I say," he said at last, " you do dance divinely." " How sweet of you, darling." " W-where did you learn ? " foolishly. " Oh I was a great dancer in my day . . . danced all night, too. It was—it's my favourite thing."

Her voice was soft and foolish, yet she spoke her words with a clipped, brittle note. The orchestra was playing " Tea for Two," now, and all the light, ethereal shapes, instinct with gaiety, wove and trembled in the soft unearthly light in the great room. Dermot was watching every incident so intently that his eyes were beginning to ache. He must not miss a thing. For never, until his last day came, perhaps, would he dance in such a company, and with such a partner, as this.

The music swung to a close, and they all stood softly clapping.

" Let's sit the next one out ? " he said, catching at the hand that seemed to evade his: " What—what is your name ? "

" Moira, darling. What's yours ? "

He told her, and she said, shaking the earrings at him, " And what do you do, Dermot, besides gate-crash parties ? "

" I write songs, and sketches for revues."

" Clever ! I adore revue. Oh *have* you heard Teddie Gerard sing ' I 'm Glad to See You 're Back ' ? "

" N-no. No, I haven't. I don't go much—to—to the theatre when I'm working, and just now—" he paused, and steadied his uneven breath—" just now I'm working very hard."

" Oh ? What at, darling ? Or is it a secret ? " Her long silk legs were crossed, her long eyes smiled at him above the long cigarette holder of pale jade.

" A musical. But I haven't written a word of it, yet. I'm stuck for—for—a theme."

She looked sympathetic.

In fact, the first faint, vague ideas for a theme, cloudy and evanescent, were beginning

"Their eyes were bright with the laughter of an eternal youth"

to stir in his brain. He leant towards her.

"I—I suppose you couldn't help?" he almost whispered.

"*Me*, darling? I haven't an idea in my head. I just adore dancing, and all my friends. Truly, *I* couldn't help you."

He was studying her intently. The silver fringe, the silver shoes, the fine, fine grain of the skin and silky shine on the hair were real enough—or were they? Wasn't there a finish about them, a final perfection, that spoke of regions elsewhere than earth? He could not look away from their fragile beauty.

Her eyes were roving, smilingly, over the dancing shapes she had called her friends.

"But I'll tell you what, darling," she said, suddenly turning to him, "why don't you write a musical comedy about *us*? The '20's, I mean. We have a kind of idea—it may be only an idea but I'm not certain—that one day a lot of silly people—so *serious*, darling—may get the wrong idea about us. Of course, none of us *really* care, now; I mean, we're all right for ever, if you know what I mean. But it *would* be nice to be remembered sometimes. . . ."

"I'll remember you, Moira darling," he broke out, not loudly, but in an intent half-whisper and leaning towards the smiling doll-like shape, "I'll remember you for ever, and how your earrings danced and the way I couldn't hold your hand because it goes through mine, and I'll write a musical for you with all the gaiety and innocence of your '20's in it. Moira darling—" he leant closer to her, his heartbeats almost breaking his breast, "tell me—*Who were you and how did you die?*"

Then he was standing outside the great door of *The King of Diamonds* in the moonlight with the knocker still half raised in his hand, and in his ear the fading timbre of a babyish brittle voice crying, "But, darling! we never ask that—it just isn't done."

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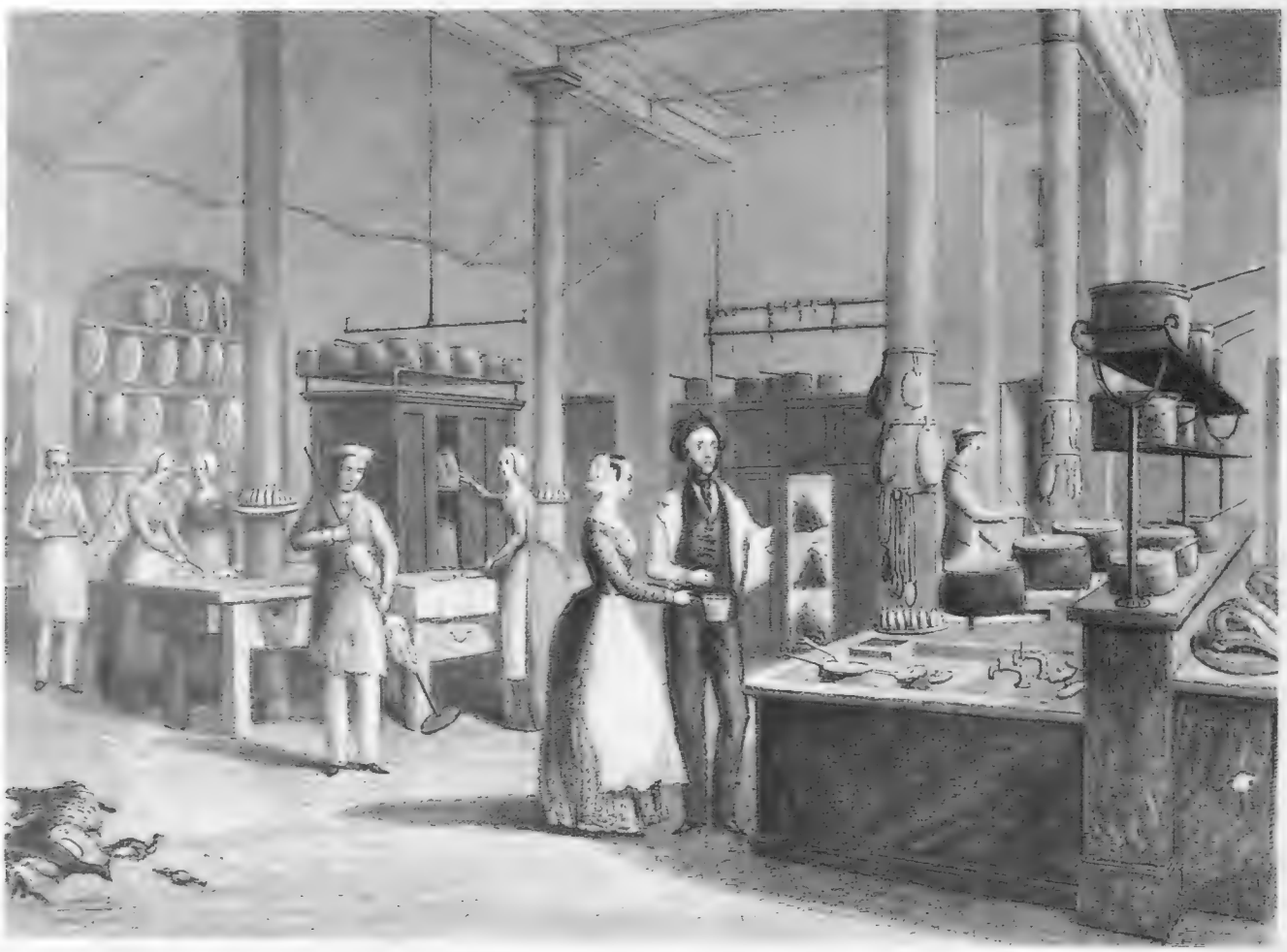
"Outside the great door with the knocker still half raised in his hand"

KINGS OF THE KITCHEN

by Primrose Rostron

Today, when City directors swallow their 2 p.m. luncheon in fifteen minutes and chairmen's ulcers can no longer stand entertaining on the expense account, it is amusing to recall the days of the great chefs, who initialled their menus and received a golden sovereign from every guest sampling a new dish. The Roman chefs cooked ostrich, garnished with leeks and raisin sauce, over a thermospodium, and dished up glis-glis (a squirrel-like dormouse) with melted honey on hot plates. Peaches came from Persia, strawberries from Mount Ida and cherries beloved of Lucullus from Pontus; while imported fish and meat reached the Tiber preserved in jars of honey instead of salt. The Italian cuisine, renowned throughout Renaissance Europe, was introduced into France by Catherine de Medici, along with poisons and ice-cream.



At work in the kitchen of the Reform Club, from a contemporary print published in the 1840's

But it was not until the reign of Louis XIV, the " King of Cooks," that French cooking reached its highest pinnacle. It was *petit couvert* when Louis dined with his intimates and *grand couvert* for banquets. Vatel, chef to the Condés, killed himself on his sword-point when the sea food failed to arrive on time for a feast served to Louis and his Court in a room hung with jonquils. At Choisy, *tables volantes* rose and fell mechanically before Louis XV and the Pompadour.

Brillat-Savarin, the lawyer turned chef, began his dinners by serving each guest 12 dozen oysters! His *Handbook of Gastronomy* urged rich men to try the following dinner: " A 7-lb. fowl stuffed with truffles. A Strasbourg *pâté de foie gras* and richly-dressed crab *à la Chambord.*" These dishes were followed by truffled quails with marrow spread on buttered toast, pike stuffed with crayfish and pheasant accompanied by 100 pieces of thick asparagus. This repast ended with two dozen ortolans and a pyramid of vanilla and rose confectionery, a favourite of the ladies.

Truffled turkeys, a great luxury, were served at the first restaurant to be opened in Paris, in 1782. Carriages, which had been rare in Louis XIV's reign, could now do 50 leagues in twenty-four hours along the improved roads, and *tout Paris* drove from their country estates to the Rue de Richelieu to eat *suprême de volaille* sitting under gilded mirrors. The restaurateur, Beauvilliers, and his chef offered their patrons a choice of 12 soups, 24 side dishes, 20 of mutton, 20 of beef and 30 of poultry and game. Fish, roasts, and dessert were not forgotten. The wines ranged from Burgundy to Tokay. Liqueurs, which Louis XIV introduced after meals to protect his stomach from grease, were served with the coffee.

French cooking was kept alive by the restaurant chefs during the Revolution, when potatoes were served *au naturel*. By 1804, Paris had 600 restaurants and by 1815 over 1,000. Prices rose during the peace negotiations, when the Allied monarchs paid the hotelier, Very, 3,000 francs a day for their staffs.

English tourists flocked to Rocher de Cancale, a restaurant kept by Borel, Napoleon's ex-chef, where a dinner of ten covers had to be ordered two weeks ahead. It was famed for its oysters, robins and frogs. The last specialities were served in a *fricassée* or fried with crisped parsley. The English taste, like the American to-day, had to be catered for, so soon punch, negus, bifsteak and Welsh rabbit appeared on the menu.

After the Revolution the French nobility were dead or dispersed, so many displaced French chefs came to work in London in the houses of the English upper classes, where they tyrannised over the household as well as their employers. Carème (whose ancestor, Lent, had invented *soupe maigre* in the kitchen of Pope Leo X) worked for the Czar Alexander I, Prince Talleyrand and Lord Londonderry. Talleyrand had started the habit of taking Parmesan cheese *with*, and Madeira *after*, the soup.

Then Carème became chef to the Prince Regent at Carlton House at a salary of £1,000 a year and " perks." These included pies and pasties made for the Royal tables but left uneaten. They were then sold to the snobbish at fantastic prices. After eight months Carème found " Prinny's " household a *ménage bourgeois*, so he returned to France to become chef to Baron de Rothschild at an enormous salary, out of which he kept his own carriage and box at the opera.

The authoress, Lady Morgan, dined at the Château de Boulogne, the Rothschild villa in Paris. The dining-room was apart from the house among orange trees, fountains and tropical birds. Lady Morgan noted: " There were no high-spiced sauces, no dark brown gravies, no catsup or walnut pickle. . . . The mayonnaise was fried in ice." But the highlight of the evening came when her host pointed to a " column of confectionery architecture " on which Carème had written " Lady Morgan " in spun sugar. This was fame indeed—if only her readers of *Blackwood's* and the Quarterlies could have seen her then. After the Moka, Carème was presented and they exchanged mutual compliments on each other's artistry, literary and culinary.

Many English employers must have appeared eccentric to the French chefs. The Duke of Cambridge frequently ignored the menu and demanded "roast pig and apple dumpling," while the Duke of Wellington had a passion for rice. His chef told a colleague: " I serve him dinner which would make Ude and Francatelli [rival chefs] burst with envy. He says nothing. I serve him dinner badly dressed. He says nothing. I cannot live with such a master were he 100 times a hero! " The chef left.

Gronow of the Foot Guards, a great diner-out, grumbled that the " English lack an inventive masculine genius in the kitchen." In many households food was still served—in Queen Anne fashion. Most nights Gronow sat down to mulligatawny or turtle soup, salmon and turbot surrounded by smelts. Then came saddle of mutton or roast beef. Boiled potatoes were served with every dish up to the puddings. The expensive dessert usually came from Bond Street. " Wines were chiefly port, sherry, hock, claret and burgundy —poor, thin, washy stuff."

(Continued on page 44)

A SENSE OF THE SOIL

Extracts from George Sturt's books about his gardener, Bettesworth — "The Bettesworth Book" and "Memoirs of a Country Labourer"

Illustrated by Terence Freeman

George Sturt, who wrote under the name of George Bourne, is justifiably having something of a literary revival. He was born in 1863 and lived all his life at Farnham, in Surrey, dying there in 1927. Of the series of books that he wrote about life in the village and the changing patterns of living, none are more enjoyable than the books about his gardener, Bettesworth. Sturt had been brought up in a family of wheelwrights. After teaching at the grammar school in Farnham for some years, he joined this family concern. He describes the delights and traditional skills of the craft in his book *The Wheelwright's Shop*. In the early 1890's he took a partner in business and went to live at Vine Cottage in the village of The Bourne, near Farnham, and devoted himself to writing. *The Bettesworth Book* was published in 1901 and its sequel, *Memoirs of a Country Labourer*, in 1907, both by Duckworth and Co. Ltd.

The author himself lived through a period of economic and social change. His gardener, Bettesworth, was born in the 1820's and his life spans Queen Victoria's reign. At the period when the books were written, he was an old man, troubled by his failing strength, a sick wife and a lack of money, but he remained strongly independent and cheerfully philosophic. George Sturt's books have been attacked for presenting a wistful picture of a way of life gone for ever, of a feudal type of community in which labourers were craftsmen. But, in fact, the author was at pains to point out the hazards and gruelling discomforts of the country labourer's life in the late nineteenth century. Despite this sombre background, the books are memorable for the conversations over the years between George Sturt and Bettesworth as they worked and talked in the author's garden.

(Continued on following pages)

Bettesworth digging in George Sturt's garden in Surrey. The period is about the turn of the century

A SENSE OF THE SOIL

(Continued from preceding page)

Throughout Bettesworth's talk there runs a stream of country lore, some of it wise, some of it superstition, but all of it betraying a constant, close contact with natural phenomena. Although he had been a Jack-of-all-trades, including a soldier in the Crimean War, Bettesworth was at heart a gardener. He was imbued with a sense of the soil and what grew in it. And this was complemented by a stoic acceptance of bad weather and disease. He was a kindly man, as is illustrated in his anecdote of the winter of 1889-90.

"Oh dear!" he said one day, "we don't want no snow! We had enough o' that two winters ago. That was a fair scorcher, that was. There! I couldn't tell anybody how we *did* git through. Still, we *got* through, somehow. But there was some about here as was purty near starved. That poor woman as died over here t'other day. . . ."

"I *knows* they (this woman and her family) was purty near starvin'. I give her two or three half-bushels o' taters. I can't bear to see 'em like that, 'specially if there 's little childern about. I give away bushels o' taters that winter, 'cause them as *had* got any had got 'em buried away—couldn't git at 'em (in the frozen ground). Mine was stowed away where I could git 'em."

The tyre comes off Bettesworth's little cart as he races with

Much of Bettesworth's youth was spent on a farm, before he started on wanderings over a great deal of England. Life on the farm was often rough and at times violent.

"'I did git some knockin' about. I payed one man for't though, when I was big enough. I always swore I 'd let Thomas have it, and so I did. He laid on the ground hollerin' to me to forgive 'n. "No," I says, "if you don't git up to have it, you 'll have it where you lays." But there—a cruel, spiteful feller he was, everybody said so. My master at last said to 'n, "Look here! I keeps gettin' fresh under-carters and none of 'em won't work with ye, and now you 'll ha' to change or else I shall." I swore I 'd pay 'n, and the time come at last. Me and another was up on the waggon to take the sheaves: and Thomas he wouldn't stop the waggon gwine up the field nor yet down.'

"The pace was too quick; and moreover, the man tossed up four sheaves at a time, faster than the two on the waggon could handle them, until at last Bettesworth's mate said, 'Butt 'n, Fred.' And Fred did so. The next sheaf that came up to him was hurled back, butt-end upon Thomas, Bettesworth himself promptly following. No less promptly Thomas hit him over the head with the prong, only to be himself knocked down by the other fellow, who had leapt from the waggon. 'And afore he could git up, I was over 'n '—being still but a lad—' payin' into he's ribs with my shoes.'

"He told me no more: nothing of the end of the fight. Fancy pictures the quiet harvest field, the August sky, the placid horses waiting and wondering, and those desperate men struggling cruelly in the stubble among the corn sheaves—and that is all!"

From farming, Bettesworth, still a young man, turned to being a carter. He loved horses and had many adventures with them.

"Desperate men struggling cruelly in the stubble among the corn sheaves . . ."

"'I recollect,' Bettesworth continued, 'I was comin' 'ome once down that 'ill at Long Heath in a little light cart as we used to 'ave. The *Bird-cage* they used to call it, 'cause there wa'n't ne'er another cart about like it 't that time. 'Twas made with open-work at th' sides, an' so they called it the *Bird-cage*. I was comin' down that 'ill, on my way 'ome, an' there was a couple of o' officer-lookin' blokes jest behind we, an' they hollerd f' we to git out o' the road. They reckoned they was gwine to pass we. I never took no notice, 'cause I knowed they wouldn't; an' they come tearin' 'long an' 'ollerin', an' so I just let my old 'orse step out. But when I was got 'bout 'alf-way down the 'ill I heard something goo an' I pulled up 'ard—one o' the tyres was run off.'

"'Phew!' I said.

"'Ah,' the old man continued, 'an' we was gwine at that pace, that tyre run on down past us. Then they officers come by a-swearin', but I never took no notice o' they, for I knowed as 'ow I should 'ave 'nough to do to get he 'ome! There, he was reg'lar mad. He seen that tyre goo past 'n, an' that seemed to upset 'n so, I 'ad 's much as ever I could do to 'old 'n. I jumped down an' got at his 'ead, an' he raired up—*he* knowed as he was beat, 's well as I did.'

"'Oh, do you think he knew?'

"'Oo, he knew as 'ow they 'd gone by 'n, an' he didn't like that. So all the way 'ome I 'ad to 'ave 'old of his head, an' I didn't dare leave 'n to git up in the cart: and there he went, rairin' an' prancin' across the road. Ther' was a gal up in the cart. "You sit still," I says. "Don't you try to git out: he 'll be all right." But law! I did 'ave a job. He was that wild, he kep' on a-liftin' me right up off the ground. . . .'"

During his life, Bettesworth followed a number of trades. He helped to thatch, build churches, repair buildings, and to dig and renovate wells. He appeared to have a strong head for depths as well as heights.

". . .'They 'ad a well there—jest three hunderd feet deep he was—an' he went bad. Nobody else wouldn't go down 'n; but I says, "I don't care," and I went down. Half o' the top of 'n was under the scullery, so there was

couple o' officer-lookin' blokes " down the hill at Long Heath

on'y jest room for a man to scrouge down in. But I got astride 'cross the stick put over the top for me to start from; and Mr. Maitland (the owner) he says, "Have you said your prayers, my man, before venturin' your life down there?" "No sir," I says, "I whistled 'em afore I started." "Now there 's a man!" he says. When I got down a smart ways, I never sees the like o' such a place. 'Twas all hollered out like the inside of a lime-kiln, an' black all round an' just the bare rock stickin' out. All the rest had been eat away by the tricklin' in of the water. So I called up to Steve Poulter, th' estate foreman, up at the top, an' I says, "You see that they all keeps quiet up there, Steve." 'Cause, ye see, nobody didn't know what 'twas like: 't hadn't bin opened for eighty year or more, an' you couldn't tell when anything might give way. . . . So they all kep' quiet, and when I come to 'bout ten feet from the bottom—I knowed the distance, 'cause o' course I 'ad a rod 'long wi' me for to tell 'ow much water there was—I come to the landin' stage.'

"'What 's that?' I asked.

"'Why, where 'twas all covered over wi' boards. I pulled up two of 'em—they was on'y jest laid dry, ye see—and then the stink! . . .

"'Well, when I 'd sin all I could, they dragged me up. There was four men on to the rope, 'cause ye see there wa'n't no room for no engine nor nothin': an' they had a round log for the rope to run over. An' jest before I got to the top I thinks to myself, "I 'll 'ave a game with you, my boys." So I fetched off my cap—I was got all slimy all the way up ye know—an' I fetched off my cap an' down with 'n. "I dropped my old cap," I says, when they pulled me out. "Never mind your cap, my friend!" says Mr. Maitland. "If you be come up all alive and sound yerself," he says, "I 'll find ye a hat." An' so he did, an' a good un, too. He give me a soft black hat as was worth a crown. "You rascal!" Steve says, "you done that o' purpose." "I *knows* I did," I says.'"

Garrulous, stubborn, and sometimes boastful though he was, Bettesworth becomes a vivid figure in George Sturt's books. He lives on as an idiosyncratic countryman who symbolised a whole period and way of life.

Coming up the well, Bettesworth deliberately drops his slimy cap

KINGS OF THE KITCHEN

(Continued from page 40)

The West End Clubs then charged 3s. to 4s. a head for a dinner including wine. One evening members of Brooks's and White's were dining with the Prince Regent, when he inquired about the quality of their club dinners. "Always the same eternal joints or beef steaks, the boiled fowl with oyster sauce and apple tart," they grumbled. So "Prinny" rang for his chef, Wattier, to suggest he should organise a dinner club. Wattier took premises in Bolton Street and early members included the Duke of York, Beau Brummell, Charles James Fox and Horace Walpole. Wattier's food was excellent, but high play at macos ruined the club.

Lord Sefton, a great gourmet, employed the chef, Louis Eustache Ude, at a salary of 300 guineas a year. Ude's mother had married a cook in Louis XVI's kitchen and their son, in his turn, became *Maître d'hôtel* to Madame Letitia Bonaparte before coming to England. Some years later, Creevey recorded: "... Ude, the cook of all great cooks . . . now lives with the Duke [of York], both as cook and friend."

Ude was a great character. He considered that "cooking in England, when well done, is superior to any in the world." At the first signs of indigestion he ordered "recourse to weak tea" for the victim. In those days 5-6 bottle men were not uncommon and gout was commonplace. "Everyone made their pillbox their constant companion."

Crockfords succeeded Wattiers as the fashionable establishment for men about town to visit after midnight, for a little supper and a game of hazard. Crockford was a fishmonger, who had won £100,000 from Lords Thanet and Granville and the dandy, Ball Hughes. So he built "the well-known palace in St. James's Street" with his winnings. Here, "suppers of the most exquisite kind were prepared by Ude, accompanied by the best wines in the world." The Duke of Wellington and the youngest ensigns in the Brigade of Guards were among Crockford's clientèle. One day Colonel Dawson Damer was dining there, when he met Ude in a towering rage. The chef had just served a member with a red mullet costing 2s. Ude charged another 6d. for making the sauce with his own hands, but the member refused to pay. "That imbecile believes that red mullets come out of the sea with my sauce in their pockets!" exclaimed the furious chef.

It was *de rigueur* to dine wearing a stiff white waistcoat, a blue-tailed coat with brass buttons, and an embroidered shirt fastened with expensive studs. One colonel paid £25 every Saturday for a new set during the London Season. In a corner of the dining-room Crocky sat snugly behind his desk, watchful as a dragon, as members drank his dry champagne at 7s. a bottle.

O! 'tis a dazzling sight to see,
The spread of thy festivity.
The *petits pâtés* made so natty,
For which the heart beats pit-a-patty.
Thine *omelettes aux confitures*,
Which no one elsewhere can endure.

Alexis Soyer, in 1847 the famous Victorian cook

Thine asperges, too, *en petit pois*,
Which Ude can, only, *sur ma foi*!
Dress up in that delicious way.

So wrote a contemporary in 1827.

Ude was replaced at Crockfords by the chef Francatelli, who later worked for Queen Victoria. He stayed only two years in the Royal household. Perhaps he found Windsor draughty.

In 1837 Alexis Soyer, former cook to Prince Polignac and the Duke of Sutherland, was employed by the Reform Club. His reputation was further enhanced by serving 200 breakfasts at the Queen's coronation. The kitchens of the Reform Club were then the envy of London. They had steam-heated closets and Soyer showed round admiring members' wives, to comment on the screens for reflecting heat and charcoal fires for broiling and stewing. Soyer invented a small stove to cook meals at table, and his cookery books, including a shilling one, ran into many editions. In poorer households the cook was lucky if her wages reached £10 a year.

Escoffier, friend and colleague of César Ritz, was the greatest cook of modern times. A famous dish was *Nymphes à l'Aurore*, served to the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) and his friends. "Lovely name for a lovely dish," was the comment. So soon all fashionable London was eating "nymphs of dawn," or frogs' legs, served cold in a jelly, flavoured with paprika and drunk with Moselle. Escoffier, like Carème, always flattered the ladies. *Fraises Sarah Bernhardt*, or the more familiar *pêche Melba*, were two of his specialities.

The original *pêche Melba* was inspired by the singer as Elsa, in *Lohengrin*. Escoffier served peaches and vanilla ice-cream on a silver dish set between two wings of a swan; which was carved from a block of ice and appeared on the menu as *Les pêches au cygne*. The Irishman, D'Oyly Carte, persuaded Escoffier to work at the new Savoy Hotel, which he wanted to make the de luxe hotel in London. Members of the Marlborough House set dined there and the Savoy became the rage.

That glittering era is over and today:

All shall equal be,
The Earl, the Marquess and the Dook,
The Groom, the Butler and the Cook.
The aristocrat who banks with Coutts,
The aristocrat who cleans the boots! (Gilbert)

HORSEMAN IN A WOOD

(Continued from page 28)

That Edmond, despite his tribulations, maintained some interest in Art is shown by allusions in his letters to exhibitions he was happy to have seen during those years that the locusts were eating. He mentions, among others, an exhibition of works by Daumier (1808-1879), that celebrated caricaturist whom Corot had befriended. One particular Daumier—"Croquis d'Etè, No. 2"—caught Edmond's eye, because the legend it bore named a Coffignon dame and illustrated the rather prominent nose of the Coffignon family.

With Edmond's consent, and with the concurrence of one or two of the more intimate of his artist associates in France, who were horrified at the level to which he had been reduced, his Corot passed virtually to Tudor-Hart, who already had given him £300 on account, to be deducted from any figure in excess of that at which, eventually, he might succeed in disposing of it. Tudor-Hart's motive was to prevent the picture going to an acquaintance who, taking advantage of Edmond Coffignon's need and weakness, had offered him a pittance which, in his sad impecuniosity, he felt tempted to accept. Tudor-Hart would not hear of his parting with the Corot at so ridiculously low a figure.

In July 1923, with the object of affording Edmond some further relief, Percyval Tudor-Hart succeeded in disposing of the Corot to the National Gallery for £500, handing over with the picture, for its well-being, a number of suggestions the Trustees were happy to accept. The sale of the Corot, made possible by a grant-in-aid and the Mackerell Fund, enabled him to arrange for the transference to Edmond's very slender account, at Blois, of a further and final payment of some 15,000 francs. Details of this charitable transaction are recorded in a letter he wrote to a mutual friend, whose name is not given, since the letter begins "*Mon cher ami.*" However, in correlating Tudor-Hart's papers and address-books, one was able, by a process of elimination, to discover that this letter went to their friend, Albert Renou, whom we met at the beginning of this story. Renou, a noted architect at Blois, in the land of the Loire, was regarded as one of the most celebrated restorers of France's châteaux. As Edmond Coffignon's closest associate, he was deeply grieved at his misfortune.

"Do your best," Tudor-Hart wrote to Renou, "to see that this sum is neither wasted nor gets into the hands of persons likely to take advantage of the situation in which Edmond finds himself."

Tudor-Hart concluded his letter to Albert Renou by mentioning that the picture appeared in the catalogue of Corot's works as "*un portrait équestre de Monsieur Pivot.*" The horseman was, of course, Edmond Coffignon's great-uncle.

Some years later, the Director of the National Gallery had occasion to write to Tudor-Hart, thanking him for his having made available to the Trustees the series of photographs he had taken at important stages during his restoration of the Corot in 1923, and also for much carefully written matter on the method he had employed. Today, all these photographs and particulars are filed at the National Gallery as part of the painting's dossier.

In 1920 poor Edmond Coffignon, unmarried and, perhaps, unloved, died at St. Gervais, a few kilometres from Blois. Through Tudor-Hart's kind services, he had survived just long enough to enjoy some temporary respite from the penury that had darkened his closing years. Probably the only likeness of him in existence is that which Tudor-Hart painted in 1899, and presented that same year to Albert Renou on the occasion of Albert's marriage, when Tudor-Hart was best man. This painting, now in the possession of Albert's daughter, Germaine, at Blois, portrays Edmond seated at a table and reading by lamplight. It was included in the Exhibition of Percyval Tudor-Hart's paintings, drawings, sculptures, and tapestries held last October, at Walker's Galleries, in London.

"THE CONVALESCENT"

The setting for the oil painting by James Joseph Jacques Tissot is Regent's Park in London, probably in the year 1878, when he was at the height of the fashionable and successful part of his career. The artist was born in Nantes in 1836 and became a pupil of Lamotte, the French historical painter. Tissot first exhibited at the Paris Salon in 1859 and, in view of future events, it was perhaps not insignificant that this work consisted of figures of saints which were designs for a stained-glass window. Soon he was much in demand as a profane painter, his groups of typically French women being especially popular.

After the Franco-Prussian war, in which he fought with distinction, Tissot moved to London, having a studio in St. John's Wood. Ruskin approved of some of his work and his success reached its climax with several exhibits, among them "Mavourneen" and "Sur La Tamise," at the International Exhibition in 1889.

However, an extraordinary change came into his life. He resolved to devote himself entirely to illustrating the life of Christ. The reason for this is supposed to have been some personal sorrow. Tissot went to the Holy Land in order to execute his task and spent ten years there. The result was the production of 350 water-colour drawings of New Testament scenes, which were shown in London and Paris and then reproduced in two large volumes, with supplementary notes by the artist. The paintings caused great controversy among the critics. Towards the end of his life, Tissot withdrew to the abbey of Bouillon, in France, to work on a complementary series of drawings illustrating the Old Testament. He died there in 1902 before he had completed them.

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"Scarborough in Moonlight"—by Atkinson Grimshaw, who was highly popular among Victorians for his port scenes

BESIDE THE SEASIDE

"Girl in a Striped Dress"—by T. B. Kennington. The painting is dated 1887

By the middle of the nineteenth century, holidays by the seaside were becoming extremely popular in Britain. By then the country had several thousand miles of railways, and townspeople flocked to the sea in summer. In 1856, the *Saturday Review* reported, "A rim of pasteboard-like bathing towns is completing itself round the coast. . . . On innumerable spots, where, in 1850, there was nothing but a fishing or a smuggling village, a whole town may be seen in 1856." As bathing became more and more fashionable, so the Victorian genre painters increased their output of seaside paintings. Most of these artists are little known today, although Atkinson Grimshaw, a friend of Whistler, whose pictures of ports at night were extremely popular, has enjoyed a rehabilitation in recent years.

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"The White Cliffs of Eastbourne," by William Stuart, signed by the artist and dated 1856

"On the Beach"— by Jane Maria Bowkett. The artist exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1860-85

A still life in which the emphasis is placed on the reflections in the different metals—copper, gold and silver

TEXTURES

Paintings by Victor Coverley-Price

Regular readers of the SPHERE will be familiar with the work of Victor Coverley-Price, whose black-and-white illustrations to his own and other people's articles have appeared in a number of past issues. These four still lifes present the artist in a very different manner. The meticulous attention to detail and to the surface appearance of a variety

Left: The semi-translucent appearance of an ancient Greek amphora stands out in contrast to the background of books

Apparently haphazard, this careful arrangement of a variety of balls is a study in surface textures

of objects contrast with the broad sweep of his sketching. He spent many weeks in his studio in Surrey in producing the four paintings. At one time Victor Coverley-Price lived in the Netherlands and it might be assumed from this fact that he has been influenced by the Old Dutch masters, who excelled in still-life genre painting. But, although he admires these painters, he says that he has no natural affinity with any particular school.

Mr. Coverley-Price was born at Winchester in 1901 and painting has been his chief hobby for as long as he can remember. But he has never attended any art school, teaching himself to draw and paint by studying in art galleries all over Europe and by constant practice. After winning art prizes as a schoolboy, he first exhibited at the Royal Academy while at Cambridge University. He has held five one-man exhibitions in London, and others in Mexico City, Ottawa and Cairo. Before becoming a professional artist, he served for 21 years in the Diplomatic Service and his travels all over the world included a geological expedition to South America. Always a keen traveller and mountaineer—he is a member of the Alpine Club—he prefers to work in the open air.

Right: A composition of hydrangeas, a jug and a mug, set against more old books, lit in a soft key

DUTCH FLOWER-PIECE

A little-known painting by Bartholomeus Assteyn

"A short time employed in painting flowers would make no improper part of a painter's study."—So wrote Sir Joshua Reynolds, looking back in admiration to the seventeenth century in Holland which saw the great period of Dutch flower painting. In part, the boom in this genre was due to the overriding desire of the artist to depict with fidelity the surface textures of nature; and in part it was due to the great passion of the seventeenth-century Dutch for the cultivation of flowers for exhibition. As an example of the genre, Bartholomeus Assteyn's painting is a striking illustration. Painted on panel, it is signed and dated 1632. It has been on show at the Alfred Brod Gallery in London. Little is known of Assteyn's life and his work is comparatively rare. He was born in Dordrecht in 1607, spending most of his life there until he died in 1667. The artist was influenced by another master of the genre, Balthazar Van der Ast, active in Utrecht and Delft before 1640. He in turn was influenced by Ambrosius Bosschaert, who was trained in Antwerp and who died in 1643. All three artists painted flower pieces, some of them including shells, insects and reptiles. In Assteyn's painting are depicted a curly-tailed lizard, a butterfly, a dragonfly and other insects. This custom of including creatures associated with flowers was prevalent in the years from 1600 onwards. One Dutch artist of the period, Otto Marseus van Schriek, was so renowned for his enthusiasm and exhaustive searches for rare reptiles and plants that he was known as "the ferret."

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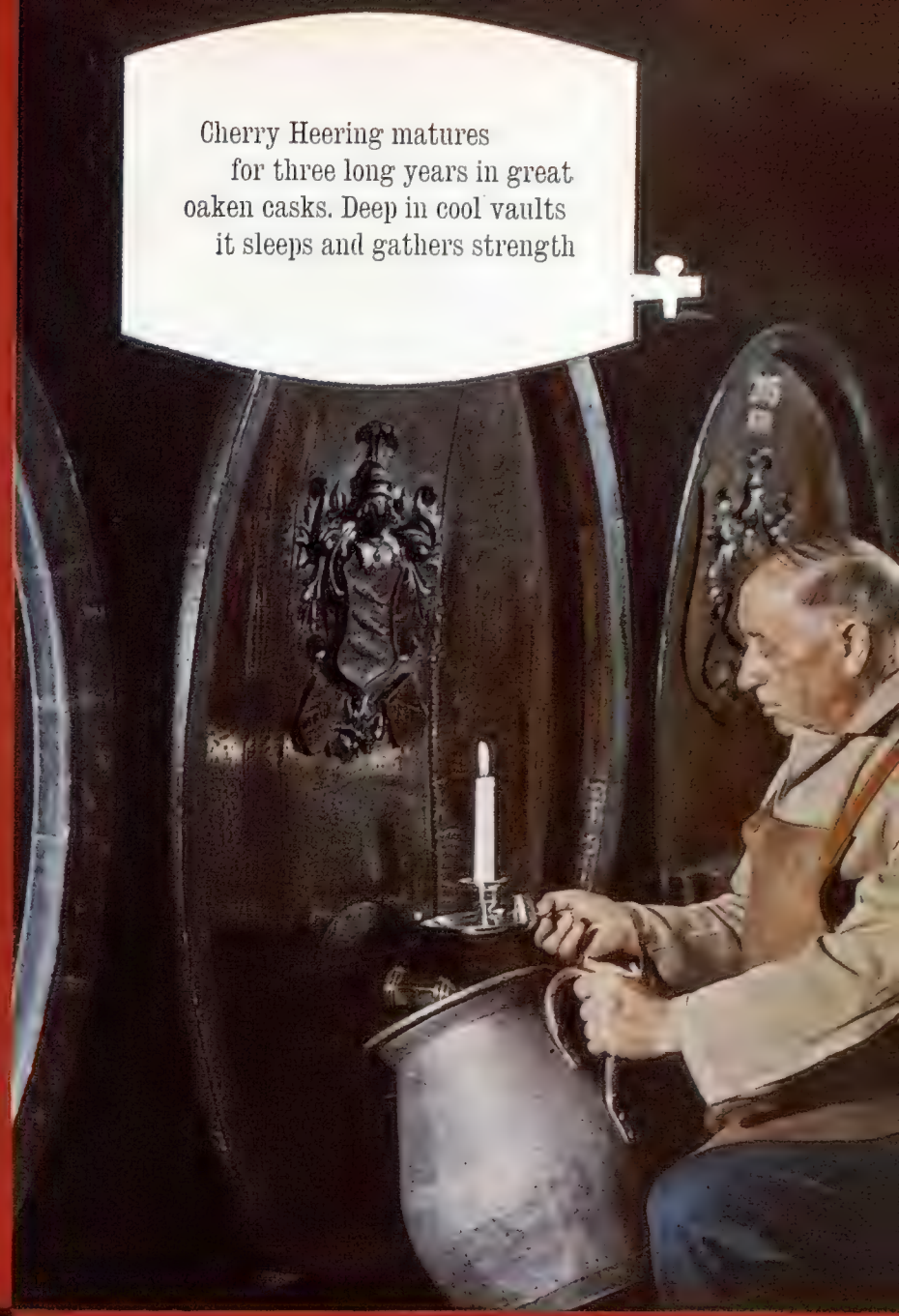

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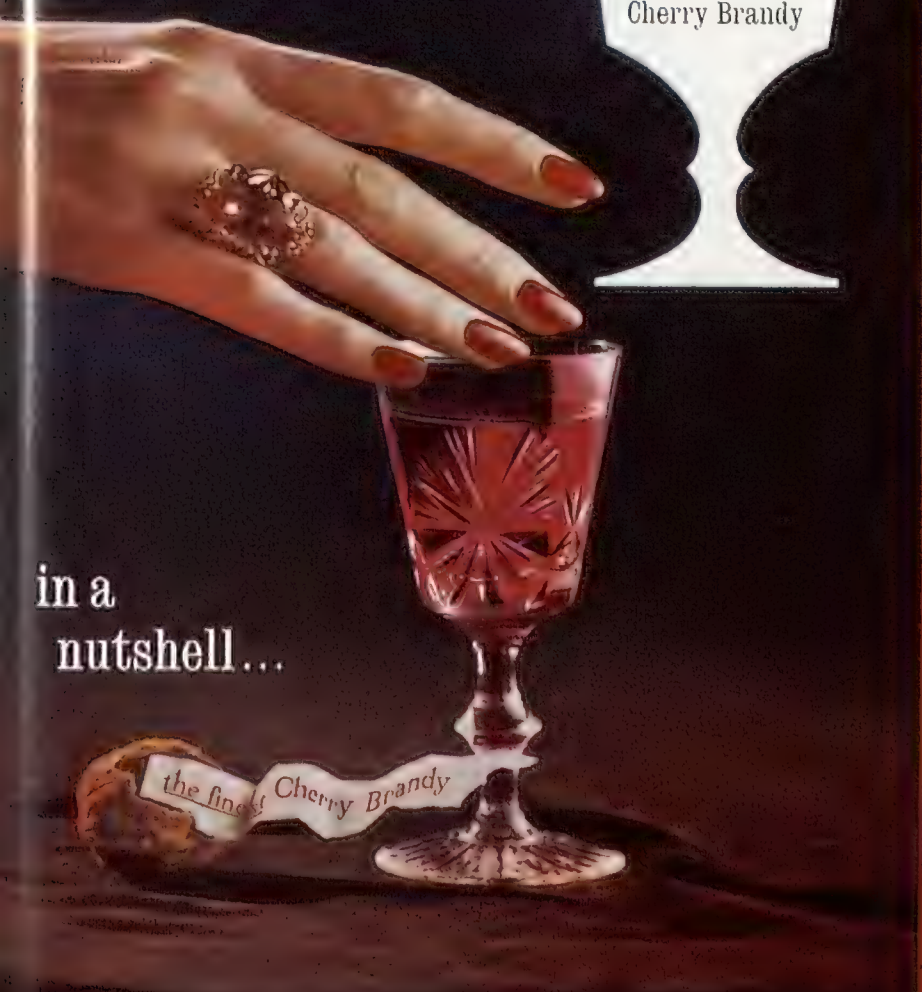


CHERRY HEERING

Traditionally
the finest
Cherry
Brandy

SAMUEL SCOTT AT WESTMINSTER

riverside at Westminster in eighteenth-century London was dominated by Westminster Abbey

two paintings by Samuel Scott show a very different Westminster from that existing today,—in the eighteenth century the Thames was far wider, as the Embankment had not yet been constructed. A highly popular artist in his time, Scott had great talent as a painter of seascapes and topographical views. His date of birth is not certain, but it is known that he died at Bath of the gout in 1772. He was a friend of Hogarth's and was one of that artist's companions on the famous water party to Gravesend in 1732. Samuel Scott bought himself a position in the Stamp Office for £1,000. This gave him a salary of £100 a year for two or three days' work a week. Later he grew so popular that he could afford to sell out. Although influenced by Canaletto and the Van de Veldes, Samuel Scott was a worthy recorder of the London scene.

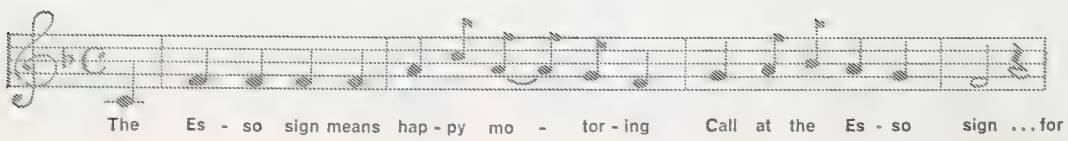
Pictures reproduced by permission of M. Bernard

Boats ply on the Thames past a very different waterfront from today's. Westminster Bridge leads to a South Bank still largely rural

Quicker-starting
cracker-motto writers
get it right,

Widow Twankey does it
as an encore every night,

Father Christmas
murmurs it,
and climbs to cruising height—



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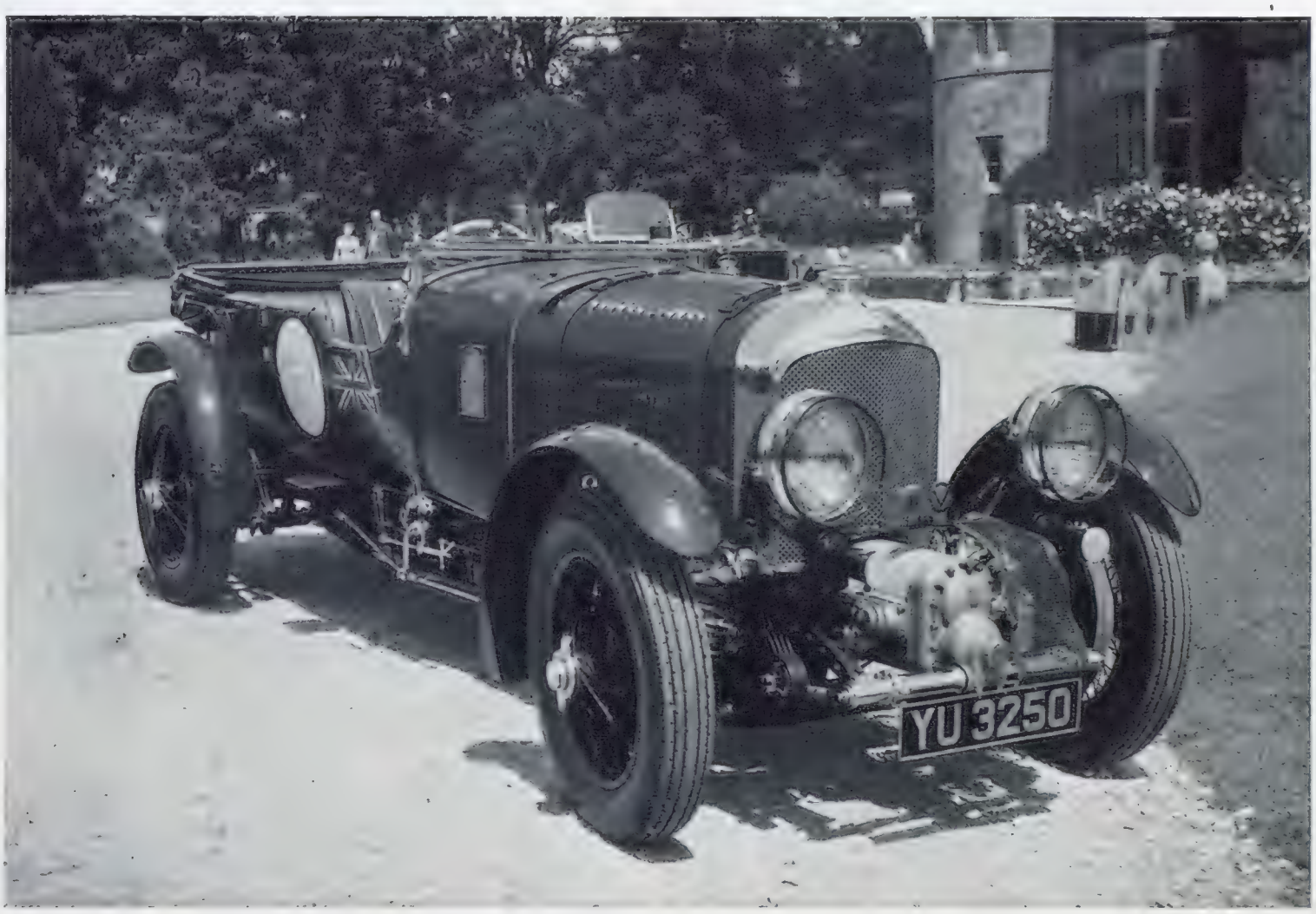
COLLECTORS' PIECES

The Fashion for Vintage Cars

By Courtenay Edwards



The 1928 4½-litre supercharged Bentley owned by Mr. Harry Rose. This was the prototype for the famous "blower" Bentleys

Some people say it needs a psychologist to explain the recent spectacular growth in the vogue of the vintage car. Many of those closely concerned with motoring are quite prepared to accept the simple theory that it springs from an instinctive and rather envious admiration, in this age of quantity production, for the design and workmanship of many makes of car built between the end of the First World War and the year 1931: such famous makes as Bentley, Rolls-Royce, Bugatti, Hispano-Suiza, Alfa-Romeo, Alvis, Frazer-Nash and Duesenberg.

The twelve years from the beginning of 1919 to the end of 1930 have been arbitrarily fixed as the Vintage Era by the Vintage Sports Car Club, just as the Veteran Car Club decided that a veteran car is one built before the end of 1904. Cars made in the intervening period—1905 to 1916—are said to belong to the Edwardian Era; though according to one authority this has been laid down with "cavalier disregard for historical accuracy."

In this article I am mainly concerned with vintage cars, the ownership of which is beginning to rank, from many points of view, with such cultural pursuits as the collection of period furniture and rare prints. It helps to perpetuate and keep in proper perspective the names of such famous automobile designers as Ettore Bugatti, Sir Henry Royce, Louis Coatalen, Laurence Pomeroy, Sen., W. O. Bentley, Lancia and Delage. It is a hobby whose rapid growth in recent years has sent prices soaring to giddy heights—to the joy of dealers who are willing to make quick profits at the expense of gullible newcomers to the cult.

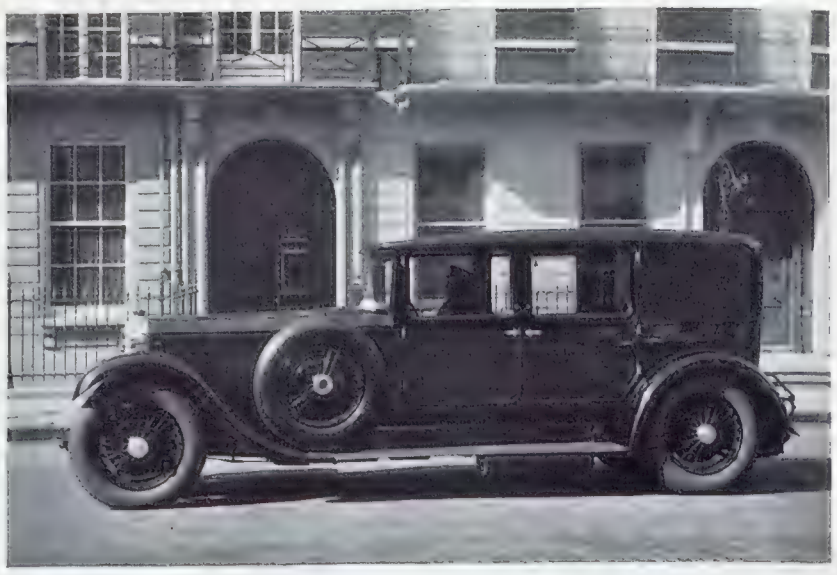
Special races, rallies and hill-climbs are organised for vintage owners; there is now an annual sale of vintage cars at Beaulieu Abbey by Southern Counties Car Auctions; and Lord Montagu has started a monthly magazine catering exclusively for the owners of veteran and vintage cars. These handsome old stagers have a special place in the Montagu Motor Museum; one-make car clubs have never been so prosperous; garages are finding it worth while to specialise in the servicing of vintage models; and fine old cars of many famous makes are being used increasingly as the motifs for ladies' scarves, pottery, glassware, tea-trays and even children's jig-saw puzzles.

The engine of a 1931 Black Label Bentley

How and when did it all begin? In *The Vintage Motor Car*, published by Batsford in 1954, Cecil Clutton and John Stanford give this answer: "The vintage car got its name just 20 years ago. Appalled at the current trends of automobile design, a small band of enthusiastic people formed a club for real sports cars: by which they mean cars made not later than 1930. They proposed to call themselves 'The Veteran Sports Car Club' but the Veteran Car Club of Great Britain very properly objected that this would cause confusion and they compromised with 'Vintage Sports Car Club'." As the name of the Club suggests, the original interest in vintage cars related mainly to sports models. Over the years the term has come to embrace models of all kinds. The Club now has thousands of members many of whom also belong to one or more of the one-make clubs or "Registers" catering for such famous marques as Bentley, Bugatti, Alvis, Fiat, Sunbeam and Humber. There is a Bull-nose Morris Club, another catering for the pre-Rootes Sunbeams and others concerned with makes like Lanchester, Lea-Francis, Railton, Jowett and Trojan.

(*Continued on following page*)

A Rolls-Royce Phantom I of the late 1920's with coupé body by Windover



The vast 1928 Daimler Double Six 50 h.p. Landaulette with body by Corsica

COLLECTORS' PIECES

(*Continued from previous page*)

They bring together motorists whose vintage cars share the same illustrious names. They encourage other motorists to buy, renovate and lovingly maintain cars of the make to which they have dedicated themselves. They provide technical information, carry out historical research, organise rallies and help to ensure an adequate supply of spares.

What do vintage cars fetch nowadays? In Britain you would probably have to pay between £600 and £700, perhaps even more, for a choice specimen of the 3-litre "Red Label" Bentley built between 1921 and 1929. This is one of the vintage cars in greatest demand, and in America the same car would probably command the equivalent of £2,000 or more. A good Bull-nose Morris built in 1926—the last year they were made—[illegible] market value of £130 to £140. In contrast, the flat-radiator [illegible] built the following year fetch only about £40. At the last Beaulieu [illegible] vintage and veteran cars by Southern Counties Car Auctions, in [illegible] with the Montagu Motor Museum, £11,175 was paid for [illegible]. One veteran which made the vintage models look mere young-[illegible] a 1900 de Dion Bouton, which was withdrawn at £1,435 because [illegible] reserve price of £1,600 had not been reached. At this fascinating [illegible] held during the summer on the lovely Palace lawns, Mr. David Wickins and his auctioneer brothers had on offer 32 models built in five different countries.

The young beginner has to start modestly. "My advice to the enthusiast buying his first vintage car is to start with something like a Model T Ford, a Morris Cowley or an Austin Twelve," said Mr. Michael Sedgwick, curator of the Montagu Motor Museum, when I visited Beaulieu recently. "They are fairly straightforward models and replacement parts are still available. If he wants to do the restoration work himself, he should be able to get something quite suitable for £30 or less. If he makes a botch of it the financial loss wouldn't be great. If he botched a car like the Bugatti it would be a loss to automobile culture. On the other hand, to ruin a Morris Cowley is merely a case of buying experience dearly." Mr. Sedgwick strongly recommends the beginner to join a one-make club catering for the particular car he chooses, if there happens to be one. There are, in fact, more than thirty of these specialist vintage clubs or bodies catering for cars in this fascinating category.

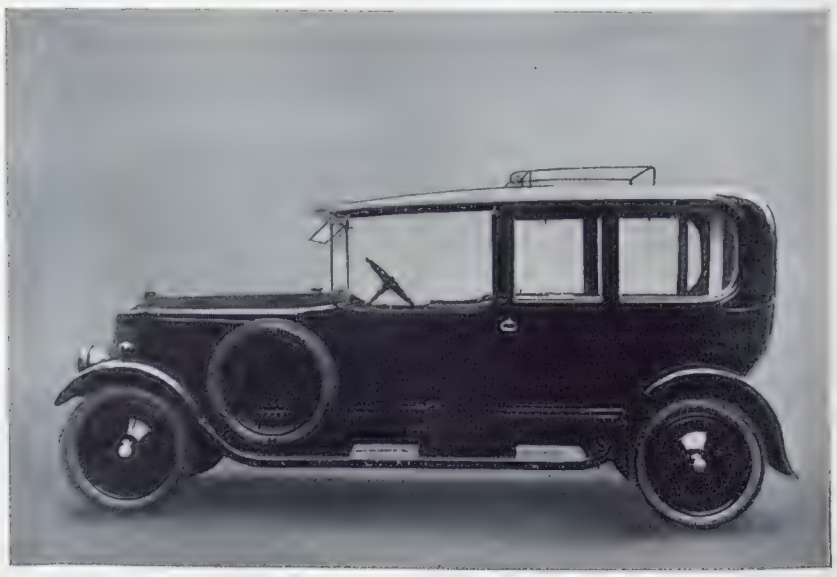
One of the most important activities of these one-make clubs is to combat the "museum mentality" in the vintage car movement and to encourage the use of these well-maintained thoroughbreds on the open road. This is still true, even since the start of the Government's programme for compulsorily testing the brakes, steering and lights of all cars ten years old or more. On all hands, during my researches for this article, I found vintage men praising Ministry of Transport officials for their sympathetic attitude towards the testing of vintage cars. I even heard of cases where the owners of vintage cars have been allowed to demonstrate their roadworthiness with the tester riding as passenger. "After all," said one club official "no young mechanic can be expected to know much about things like quadrant gear-change levers and drip-feed lubrication."

Mr. Sedgwick, who took many of the Montagu Motor Museum pictures illustrating this article, made this comment: "The test was not welcomed by the vintage movement. We feared it might involve considerable curtailment of our activities. As things have turned out, the movement has suffered very little, if at all." The movement seems to be divided into two broad categories: collectors, often of the more wealthy type, who regard their cars mainly as museum pieces and seldom take them out on to the open road; and those enthusiasts who, after finding and renovating an old car with meticulous care, drive it whenever they can, both for normal daily transport and in vintage competitions. One Bugatti owner told me there are so many races, rallies and hill-climbs for vintage cars nowadays that enthusiasts are in a position to use their cars competitively almost every week-end.

Some of the races form quite severe tests for the old cars now sailing under the vintage flag. Take, for instance, the Richard Seaman Trophy event for vintage racing cars held at Oulton Park, Cheshire, in June. This 100-kilometre race was won by Patrick Lindsay at 75.77 m.p.h. in his well-known 1936 E.R.A.—"Remus." Mention of this 1936 model brings me to the subject of the P.V.T.—Post Vintage Thoroughbreds. These are cars built between 1931 and the outbreak of war, the design of which is considered to be so good that they carry on the vintage tradition. This is a relatively new vintage category introduced by the Vintage Sports Car Club because, according to a spokesman, "it helps to make up for the relative shortage of genuine veteran and vintage cars." Into the P.V.T. category fall many interesting models of the Bentley, Hispano-Suiza, Alfa-Romeo, front-wheel drive Citroens (1935-39) and the Fiat Type 508 S (1935-37).

(*Continued on page 59*)

A 1930 Series J Duesenberg with Barker body, owned by Mr. C. S. Phillips



A 30 h.p. Armstrong-Siddeley of the early 1920's—coachwork by Barker

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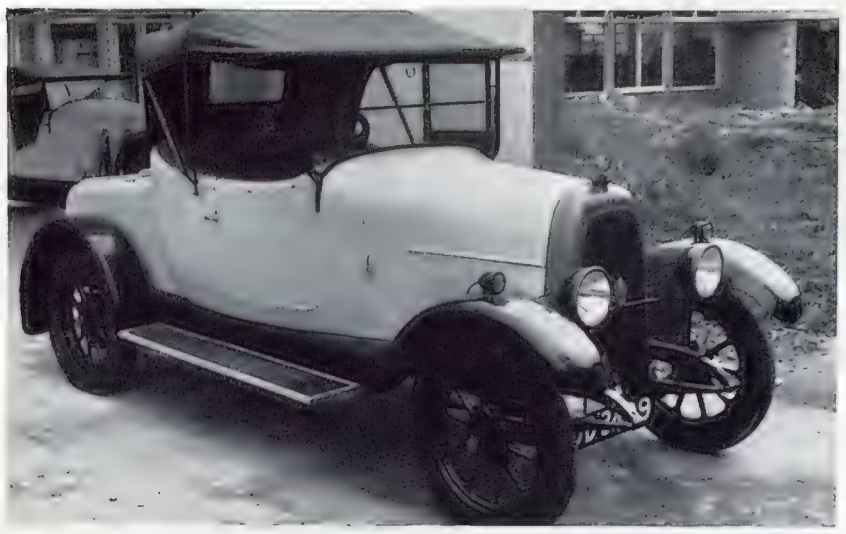
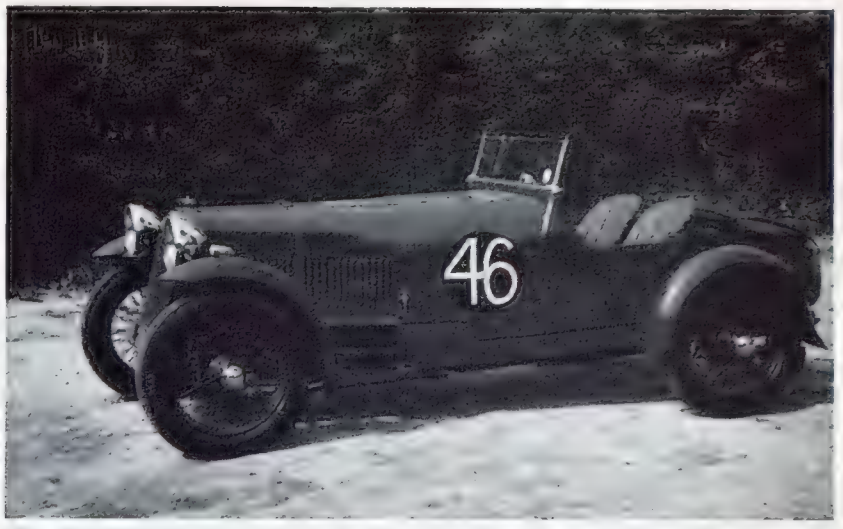


A 1924 Fiat Tipo 501, of 10/15 h.p., at the Brighton Motor Museum



A 1928 supercharged 12/75 h.p. Alvis, with all-round independent suspension

COLLECTORS' PIECES

(*Continued from page 56*)

A notable case which I have come across this year is the 1931, 4½-litre Black Label Bentley—a two-seater tourer—bought inexpensively not long ago by Captain Martin Sorsbie, a former B.O.A.C. executive who is now a safari expert in Kenya and a director of Nairobi's famous "Treetops" establishment, where the Queen was staying when her father died. Captain Sorsbie sent this fine but rather neglected old Bentley to Jack Barclay—the well-known London Rolls-Royce and Bentley dealer—for restoration at his new service station in Battersea. Here, under the watchful eye of Mr. Fergusson Wood—director of the service station and a Rolls-Royce apprentice who now runs around in a 1906 version of the marque—the Bentley was brought to life again and sprayed in British racing green before being shipped to Nairobi. Open vintage cars, incidentally, are much more widely esteemed than closed models. If the reverse is true of the veteran class it is probably due to the fact that the most popular of all the veteran rallies—the annual Emancipation Run from London to Brighton—is usually afflicted by heavy rain.

A 1924 Austin Seven at the Montagu Motor Museum, Beaulieu

The Vintage Sports Car Club has strong views on the question of modifications to vintage cars, and rightly so, for there should be as little interference as possible with their strong, sometimes even eccentric, personalities and highly individual characters. Safety factors are taken carefully into account and in some circumstances the fitting of four-wheel brakes is "permitted." Headlamps can be brought up to modern standards. The Club frowns on the addition of chrome to cars which did not have any in their original form. In fact, chrome was not in general use until towards the end of the vintage period and I doubt if there was any on cars built before 1927.

The vintage cars in greatest demand today are the 3-litre Red Label Bentleys—the short-chassis models built between 1921 and 1929—and the open 4½-litre Bentleys (1929-1930) which have been known to develop nearly 250 brake-horsepower with very expert tuning. There seems to be far less enthusiasm for the long-chassis 3-litre Bentleys or the large 6-cylinder models (partly, no doubt, because of their big fuel thirst). If Rolls-Royce models in general are less popular than Bentleys as collectors' pieces, it is probably due to a number of different factors. There are a lot of them about and their scarcity value is low. There is something of a reaction against formal coachwork and the fact that many of the inexpensive Rolls-Royces on offer today are superannuated hearses may tend to depress the market. I am advised that a big Phantom I hearse should not cost more than about £40.

One collector who specialises in Rolls-Royces is Mr. Stanley Sears, of Bolney, Sussex. He is President of the Veteran Car Club and sets a fine example by the frequency with which he drives his wonderful old cars on the open road. Other well-known collectors are Mr. Francis Hutton-Stott, of Newbury, Berks. (who collects only Lanchesters) and Mr. Cecil Clutton, of London. Biggest of all, of course, in a special kind of way, is Lord Montagu of Beaulieu, who founded his Motor Museum in 1952 in memory of his father, one of Britain's motoring pioneers. It is probably the world's most cosmopolitan collection of historic cars. Half the 140 vehicles on the museum books—80 of them are on show at Beaulieu and 40 or so at the "branch office" at Brighton, with the others under "treatment"—are vintage models and by attracting visitors to Beaulieu at the rate of 300,000 a year they do much to foster interest in the movement.

In running his museum, Edward Montague adopts the "prison without bars" mentality, for everything in the museum actually owned by it is either capable of running or eventually will be made to do so. It is difficult to get reliable estimates of the number of vintage cars in Britain today which are preserved as musum pieces or gaily and proudly used for day-to-day motoring. One authority told me he thought there must be 7,000 pre-1931 cars in Britain, including some 2,500 built before 1917. On this reckoning the number of vintage cars is about 4,500. A central register of these fine old cars is badly needed.

A 1919 16 h.p. 4-cylinder Sunbeam at Beaulieu

A 1925 Vauxhall 30/98 OE type, with wooden boat-decked sports body

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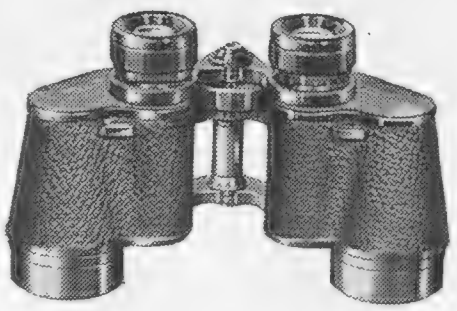

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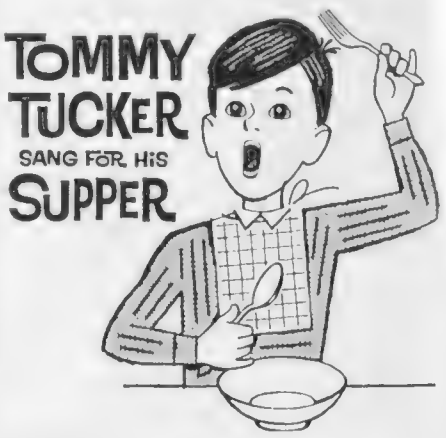

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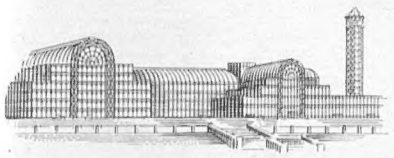

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